



An Interdisciplinary Centre of Excellence
at Åbo Akademi University

DEMOCRACY: A CITIZEN PERSPECTIVE

Experiment on Democratic Deliberation

D:CE is

- An Interdisciplinary Centre of Excellence...
- ...at Åbo Akademi University...
- ...running years 2006-2010 and...
- ...funded by Åbo Akademi University and Åbo Akademi Foundation...
- ...and in separate projects also by Academy of Finland, Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, Nessling Foundation.

A scientific experiment called **Citizen Deliberation** was held in Åbo on **November 18th 2006**.

The event took place at the University of Turku. The topic was the use of nuclear energy in Finland.

A survey, mainly covering political issues in general and energy policy in particular, was sent to a random sample of 2500 people. These people were also invited to take part in the deliberative experiment.

A self-selected sample of about 144 participants was the aim for the actual deliberation, finally 136

came to the event. The participants were expected to read information, to hear an expert panel and to discuss in small groups, before deciding on the issue.

More information at:
www.dce.abo.fi/democratic_deliberation.html

Participants Listening to Experts
Photo: Kimmo Grönlund



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Political Science Meeting in Vasa, January 2007

The XXXIXth Annual Research Meeting of the Finnish Political Science Association is held at Åbo Akademi University in Vasa 11-12 January, 2007.

A host of workshops convene during the two days to discuss current re-

search of Finnish political scientists.

Professor **Rachel Gibson** (University of Leicester) is invited as key-note speaker. She gives a presentation entitled "Political Communication 2.0?: Privatisation, Fragmentation and Interactivity in the

New Media Age".

The Political Science Meeting is jointly arranged by the Finnish Political Science Association and Åbo Akademi University.

More information at:
www.vasa.abo.fi/politiikan/

Democracy: A Citizen Perspective – The Research Outline

To what extent has a transition to Audience Democracy taken place?

What are its consequences from the point of view of the citizen, and what action do they call for?

The research carried out within the realm of the Centre examines the development of modern democracy from the point of view of the citizen.

It probes the notion that modern democracy has, as a result a fundamental social transformation during recent decades, left its earlier class- and party-based forms and developed into an Audience Democracy. By combining an interdisciplinary approach with the possibilities offered by information technology and new methods, it aims at an analysis which is both comprehensive and innovative. As it brings together scholars from five different disciplines in Åbo and Vasa the Centre bridges both disciplinary and geographical boundaries.

The objectives of the project can be summarized in the form of two broad research questions:

1. To what extent has a transition to Audience Democracy taken place?
2. What are its consequences from the point of view of the citizen, and what action do they call for?

The first research question will be addressed along four thematic dimensions: Political Participation, Public Institutions, Media, and Individual, Group and Society. Under each theme, research is structured according to three central aspects: Citizens, Channels and Political System. Both syntheses of earlier research and new studies will be presented. Theoretically formulated hypotheses

are consistently examined with the aid of systematic empirical data. The research is comparative throughout and based on quantitative data, systematic content analyses and comparative case studies.

In order to answer the second question, a platform for several kinds of experimental studies will be constructed. This *Virtual Polity* simulates a real-life society and will supply tools for deliberation among citizens, between the people and their representatives and within the political elite. It will also allow for testing of various mechanisms for electronic governance.

The Full Research Plan at: www.dce.abo.fi/



Kim Strandberg
Photo: Åbo Akademi

Recent Research Kim Strandberg: Parties, Candidates and Citizens On-Line – Studies of Politics on the Internet

The thesis examines central theories regarding how the use of the Internet by political actors and citizens might affect the politics of modern representative democracies.

Firstly, does the use of internet in political campaigning reinforce or

narrow the gap between parties of different sizes? Secondly, are citizens becoming more politically active and engaged via political websites or whether on-line politics only 'preaches' to the converted?

The empirical examination is mainly carried out

in Finnish context although one study has a comparative focus. The findings of the thesis indicate that, thus far, the internet has neither altered the power structures between political actors, nor served to politically mobilize citizens.

D:CE Advisory Board in Vasa, June 19-20, 2006

Our international advisory board met with D:CE staff and the Steering Group for the first time in June 19-20, 2006. The 2-day meeting took place in Vasa, at SAMFORSK office. The official part of the meeting included a general presentation and discussion of the project as well as individual presentations of on-going research by D:CE em-

ployees. The social events for this meeting included wonderful evening out in the Vasa archipelago, with participants enjoying smoke sauna, midnight sun and finally a lovely dinner.

D:CE International Advisory Board:

Professor **Sören Holmberg**, Göteborg,

Professor **Detlef Jahn**, Greifswald,

Professor Emerita **Kay Lawson**, San Francisco State,

Professor **Henry Milner**, Université de Montreal, and

Professor **Poul Erik Mouritzen**, Odense.



Steering Group and D:CE Staff at the Dinner Table—Kalle's Inn
Photo: Helena Hurme

D:CE Steering Group Visited Berlin and Hertie School of Governance, December 4 - 5, 2006

D:CE Steering Board visited Berlin and Hertie School of Governance in early December in order to meet and get information from another interdisciplinary oriented research centre for studies within the field of changing democracy. Our hosts at the Hertie School of Governance were professor Stein Kuhnle and pro-

fessor Sonja Wälti, who presented the educational and research activities in the small scale private university.

In addition to this visit, the steering group had also a formal board meeting.



D:CE Steering Group at Hertie School of Governance, Berlin
Photo: Helena Hurme

D:CE Steering Group:

Director:

Lauri Karvonen, Professor of Political Science

Associate director:

Kimmo Grönlund, Director of Research

Members:

Göran Djupsund, Professor of Political Science and Political Communication

Helena Hurme, Professor of Developmental Psychology

Marko Joas, Director of Research (Public Administration)



The D:CE/SAMFORSK Vasa Location
Photo: Åbo Akademi



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D:CE in Åbo: Hus Lindman. Photo: Marko Joas

DEMOCRACY: A CITIZEN PERSPECTIVE An Interdisciplinary Centre of Excellence

A Cooperation Between:

Political Science, Public Administration, Developmental Psychology,
and SAMFORSK – Swedish Institute for Social Research in Finland and
Institute for Comparative Nordic Politics and Administration

Coming Events and Recent Publications

PL Ann-Sofie Hermanson will defend her doctoral dissertation "Miljövårdens institutionalisering i Finland – idé, rörelse, administration" in Auditorium Salin, Axelia, Åbo Akademi, Åbo, on Friday, January 19, 2007, at 12 o'clock noon.

Professor emeritus Lennart J. Lundqvist, Göteborg University, will serve as External Examiner.



Ann-Sofie Hermanson
Photo: Åbo Akademi

Recent Publications:

T. Carlson & K. Strandberg (2007), "The European Election on the Web in a candidate-centered system: The case of Finland" in Kluver, Foot, Schneider & Jankowski (eds.), *The Internet and National Elections*. Routledge.

B. Evans, M. Joas, S. Sundback & K. Theobald (2006), "Governing Local Sustainability", *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, Vol. 49, No. 6, 849 – 867.

K. Grönlund & H. Milner. 2006. The Determinants of Political Knowledge in Comparative Perspective. *Scandinavian Political Studies* 29 (4), 386-406.

M. Setälä (2006), "On the Problems of Responsibility and Accountability in Referendums". *European Journal of Political Research*, 45, 5, 701-723.

M. Setälä and K. Grönlund (2006), Parliamentary Websites: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives. *Information Polity* 11, 2, 149-162.

K. Lundell (2006), *Contextual Determinants of Electoral System Choice. A Macro-Comparative Study 1945-2003*. Åbo Akademi UP.

P. Söderlund (2006), *The Dynamics of Federalism in Russia. A Study of Formal and Informal Power Resources of the Regional Chief Executives in Russian Centre-Region Relations*. Åbo Akademi UP.

K. Strandberg (2006), *Parties, Candidates and Citizens On-Line: Studies of Politics on the Internet*. Åbo Akademi UP.

