Empowering citizen – improving legitimate e-government?
- An outline of modeling on output-side e-government and legitimacy

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Paper presented at: 2012 EGPA Annual Conference 5-8 September Bergen, Norway
Permanent Study Group 1: Information and Communications Technologies in Public Administration

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Abstract:
The output side of the political system provides services for citizens and societies. It is on the output side daily interaction among citizens and public administration take place and is maintained. This is, indeed, a crucial aspect of daily life for most citizens and their interpretation of a good life, not at least in mature welfare states with extensive provision of public social services as in Sweden and has been recognized as important for political legitimacy.

e-democracy are extending the meaning of democracy by using information technologies on the in-put side of the political system and thereby influencing political legitimacy in traditional terms. But there is also, as addressed in this paper, digital democratic empowerment and interaction among citizens and the public administration at the output side of the political system. Thus the use of electronic governmental interaction at the output side of the political system is a core of political legitimacy in the digital era - legitimate e-government.

On the output side of the political system the introduction of e-government have mainly lead to provision of public e-services and information about public services in general. A consequence of the increased and improved Internet use is also that citizens become more informed. In their roles as citizens they can extend their knowledge about available services, social rights and they may also compare public services among municipalities, regions and even states. There are online communities empowering citizens in this respect in different sectors (for example health care, social services and social insurances) and among different groups (for example elderly, people on parental leave and students). In general the e-citizen can probably be empowered and strengthen their positions in relation to the public administration through these community groups. The legitimacy for public administration in general may increase by these processes. This paper will open discussions and test models on how empowering processes takes place in on-line communities and relate them to meanings of legitimacy.
Virtual citizen arenas challenging the state - Introduction
The development of the digital society during last decades has fundamentally changed among all other things people’s everyday lives, including their relations to the state (see for ex Baldersheim et al, 2007, EU 2009; Heeks 1999). This development is mirrored by an increasing research interest in the phenomenon of e-government. The core of this research centers around questions like organization and design of e-government systems, citizens access to governmental services, potentials for improved efficiency by making it easier for agencies to reach out to citizens with information but also how citizen’s access is improved through e-channels of interaction between agency and citizen (Fountain, 2001; Olsson & Åström (ed) 2006). Although these questions are important there are also other important questions triggered by these developments that needs to be addressed from a democratic perspective. We will argue that these developments involve deeper and more transformational challenges to the traditional view relation of citizen-state than research has hitherto shown.

One of the most fundamental challenges of e-society to traditional conceptualizations of citizen-state relations is that in e-society (primarily represented through internet), citizenship, and thereby also the relation citizen-state, including the relation client-welfare state services, is not territorially defined anymore. The territorial grounding and the geography of the state have been fundamental for the citizenship, but it is challenged by the use of information technologies (Graham, 1998). This also challenges the ground on where and how legitimacy is gained and who may be seen as citizen (Wihlborg 1999). The territorial grounding is fundamental for the input side of the political system. It is the citizens within the state’s territory that can participate in democratic elections and the pay taxes for the public service provision. Thus the legitimacy of the state has mostly been seen in the relation between common core values and governmental policies and activities. But legitimacy, has recently also be recognized as formed at the output side of the political system in the service delivery of the state (Rothstein 2008; 2009; Stensöta 2009; 2010a). Face-to-face interaction among street-level bureaucrats and citizens are here crucial for legitimacy, but also the common notion of public service provision when needed.

Rothstein’s (2009) conclusion that legitimacy for the state is also, even mostly, formed in face-to-face interaction interchanges the analysis of legitimacy to the output side of government. In contrast to most research on government and citizen’s influence will focus on the output side of the political system. In this perspective the citizen is not primarily the voter and part of public onions but rather the client using public services. Public services are in this respect indeed different and range from infrastructures like roads, security and water systems to individual
services as health care and education. Thus legitimacy of e-government will also probably be found at the output side of government.

Research that has focused on e-government on the output side of the political system have mainly focused on the citizens access to public e-services and competences to use the services provided by governmental actors (see for example Axelsson et al 2010). Such studies take of from the e-governmental services and the design of them. We will extend the meanings by even including processes and initiatives not primarily generated by government, but also to focus on how citizens can empower themselves and others by digital interaction in relation to public services. Our idea is that digital tools might provide arenas for citizens to interact and help each other to use and understand (and thereby improve the legitimacy) public services provided in different forms. We will show that by some brief illustrations from on-line forums. The ambition of this mainly theoretical paper is to elaborate on conceptual level on how e-government on the out-put side of the political system may challenge the power relations among citizens and governmental authorities, and how these challenges influence legitimacy.

Aim of the paper
The aim of this paper to show how and elaborate on models of legitimacy of e-government on the output side of the political system and discuss empowering implications for e-citizens to outline a further proposed empirical study.

Methodological comments
This paper has an explorative ambition since we strive to extend the meanings of legitimacy in relation to e-government from an output side perspective. This emerges both from theoretical considerations and practical implications. Thus we will give some illustrations from digital discussion forums. These are selected not to be representative in any way but rather to illustrate what we want to discuss. The illustrations are thus selected from discussions regarding the extensive parental leave social security system in Sweden and some health care discussions. The chosen quotes illustrate aspects of the output side services that citizens have related to and discussed. We do not explicitly analyze these, but rather consider them as a bottom up introduction to the more theoretical and less specific discussion that follows. For the theoretical discussion we attempt to combine impressions from the e-government field with Rothstein’s conceptualization of output side legitimacy. However, we do not attempt reach a closed and defied model, but will use this for outlining a research project.
Outline of the paper
To illustrate the general discussion above we will start the paper by two brief presentations of situations where citizens use different forms of digital discussion forums in ways that we have seen as peer empowering and its implications on legitimacy. These are selected to illustrate interactions and issues raised on the output side of the political system. Thereafter more traditional perspectives on legitimacy will briefly be presented before it is related to legitimacy on the output side of the political system and related to e-government. Based on this tentative model we will also briefly outline a planned empirical study of digital empowerment of citizens on the output side of the political system.

Impressions and illustrations from the field
Based on the introductory discussion we will now show some illustrations that indicate what we will discuss more theoretical later. In this section we will present some brief examples of how citizens discuss and encourage each other in online forums in relation to public administration. We have chosen the case of parental leave since that is a common welfare output in the mature social democratic welfare state of Sweden and since most people are concerned. The selected illustrations highlight different aspects of support and empowerment that also can be seen as legitimating processes. Another widespread illustration, that we will also mention, is the use of Internet for health care information. Finally, we will discuss some indeed tentative implications that can be drawn from these illustrations.

On parental leave – making the most out of the social security schema
The Swedish parental leave program is extensive in international compression and a central part of everyday life for most parents with small children in Sweden today. It is an output of the political welfare system generated from policy aims like gender equality, social security and family support. The basics are the parental leave that guarantee leave from the employer and an income support paid by the national authority The Swedish Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan). For each child, in general, the parents receive a total of 480 days of benefits at different levels in relation to their income (web 1). After this period of parental leave period most Swedish children are in childcare provided by municipalities, while both parents work. The stage in between parental leave and childcare is flexible and most parents – most often women – work part time for the first period. These arrangements are complicated and most parents aim to get the most out of both systems. There is also a temporary parental leave, which can be used if the child is sick and cannot be in childcare. In parental discussion forum on the web this period of transition
is therefore something that often are raised into discussion. Here is an extract from the discussion forum *Everything for parents* [Allt för föräldrar] (my translation) (web 2):

**Working part time – rules?** Clownis 2011-04-05, 21:37, starting the line, there was a total of 15 responses to this question, but the three first are included here)

How many hours a week can a child go to childcare (2 years old) when one parent is working full time and the other is working 50% and 50% on parental leave? I cannot find any info on this! The rule for the “15-hour week” in childcare seems to apply only if you are on full-time parental leave. In my case, I will be working 50% for six months and then 75%. Someone wise who knows?

**Response 1, Annisan** 2011-04-05, 22:37

If you are on parental leave for the 2-year-old child, that child cannot be at the childcare at the same time.

It is different in different municipalities, this has been a full time position if you work 50% but you have the travel time and working time. It is best to check with the Children and Youth Committee in your municipality for correct answers.

**Response 2: Anonymous** 2011-04-06, 09:30

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Here [in my municipality] you can leave the child at the childcare the time you work. In your case it will be 50% + the travel time, which here is 30 minutes (unless you have super long).

You work 50% - you get the child care for 20 hours + travel time on the days you work.

**Response 3: Mum of D and A** 2011-04-06, 21:21

Same here. Time working is the time that gives childcare + travel time. Though this is probably no time limit on travel time. It's very different how much time you need to get to work.

This discussion indicates that the responders to the question both help out by clarifying the differences of the parental leave and the childcare. They also pay attention to the differences among the municipalities (according to the constitutional local autonomy). The parent – Annisan - that raised the issues of how to manage the shift into part-time work got support from other parents and her rights are clarified and even some additional issues as travelling time was also discussed. T Annisan will probably feel empowered in her further contacts with the municipality and The Swedish Social Insurance Agency. This discussion can be seen as a small individual form of empowerment, when citizens are helping out to clarify one’s rights in complex social welfare programs.
The parents are helping each other regarding different issues in the forum. This is even more obvious regarding the income support systems that are means tested. The pregnancy allowance is designated to women in occupations where pregnancy could be a particular risk. The pregnant woman has to apply for the support and leave. A health certificate is necessary, but also a personal argumentation on why it is not appropriate to work. There are several discussions on these support systems and the best way to argue at the discussion forum *Everything for parents* [Allt för föräldrar]. One example is a women asking for help with the formulations in her application, again own translations (web 3).

**A review of pregnancy allowance application?** (Snuffsetuffsan, 2012-02-01, 13:32)

Hi there!

I wonder if anyone who previously made a 'successful' pregnancy allowance application is willing to give me some feedback on my application?

I have written what my work is about and why it is not appropriate for a pregnant woman to do this. It is two A4 pages in Word, but I'm afraid it will feel like a "wailing wall" on my job rather than "good reasons" to why I should not work there now.

So I was wondering if anyone is able to read what I wrote to give me some feedback and help me to correct things. I do not want it to end up as sick leave instead of maternity allowance as well.

Thanks in advance!

After some responses and clarifications regarding her type of work there were two responses that gave some clear advices. There was also a reference to more private communication on the issue over e-mail.

**Response 7: MissSandra 2012-02-11, 10:43**

Well, then you should write as it is, I believe that is the best. Tell them that you have a lot of heavy lifting and with what. I work as a nurse on an acute surgical ward. We have very heavy loads of people that I wrote. We also have a lot of emergency situations where I have to be quick and smooth. I'm not that now. I also work with chemotherapy and antibiotics; they must consider that as well.

I wrote one A4 page and described what I was working on during the day. So try to describe the hard work you have as good as possible. If you have written two pages that should definitely be enough.

**Response 8: Snuffsetuffsan, 2012-02-11, 13:55**

Aah ... Okay. I will submit the papers that I wrote now. But the fear that they will be perceived as kind of complaining at my job and that is not what I want. But I'll have to ask my partner read it through and see what he thinks.
I was so tired yesterday, when a teacher I had in high school came into my job and we talked a little about pregnancy and such. So she said: ‘Well, then you should work here until the very end, then?’ I replied: ‘Well, almost. It will probably be a bit hard the last month, this job does not fit a pregnant’. So kind, she saw a little accusingly out and said, ‘Though you know that pregnancy is not a disease?’

Then I felt more dumb, misunderstood and lazy than ever. I want to do what is best for me and my baby [bebben – baby talk in Swedish]. The last thing I will is to expose myself and my baby to any unnecessary risk. Everyone do not have the same resources and so on. I need this pregnancy allowance.

Thanks for your help!

Response 9: MissSandra 2012-02-12, 9:55

No, but you should not complain about the job, but describe what it is that makes you hindered due to pregnancy to do your job.

Very bad of her to say so! We know it is not a disease but as we have heavy work, so we put ourselves and your babies to unnecessary risks, that that can make us or the baby sick =) so I think. So FORGET about her stupid comment. Hope it resolves with everything but as I said just write the way it is at work. And it could be that they will call you and want to ask questions so it is good to be prepared for that too!

Good luck

This discussion shows how “MissSandra”, who obvious already have got her pregnancy allowance approved is encouraging “Snuffsetuffsan” both on how to argue in the application to the Agency and also not to bother about the comments from others. The allowance might be seen as a little stigmatized, but here they together agree that their use of it is legitimate. This is an indication on how the digital forum is used to support and encourage citizens at the output-side of the political system to find their rights and express them well. There is no reference to the quite complicated policy regulations on this part of the social security for pregnant women instead it is translated into how it was used in another case – nursing work. It also indicates a more general human interpersonal support.

At the same forum discussion forum Everything for parents [Allt för föräldrar] The Swedish Social Insurance Agency is also active and there is a specific discussion room managed by professionals at the Agency. The room is called Ask the Social Insurance Agency. There is one Facebook user by the Agency, but all posts are signed by officer at the agency, like “Stellan, handläggare”. There are about five questions a week in this group and all questions are answered in general terms within a day. For more individual questions the agency refers to it’s own interactive web portal at the agency’s webpage. The Swedish Social Insurance Agency also has a broad e-service portal for the parental leave schema and other social security programs. The e-services can be seen as an interface of the output side of the public administration. At the agency’s web-page there is a
common log-in based on a secure electronic identification system, provided – at the moment – by the Swedish commercial banks, opening for several different social security programs managed by the agency.

In relation to the parental leave programs the Swedish Social Insurance Agency has Facebook page with more than 24 000 likes. The Agency here gives information on current issues and users can also comment on each other’s questions. When the agency this month presented (2012-07-23) the monthly information on pay dates for the parental leave allowance they got 81 likes and 55 comments in less than 12 hours. This is the first part of the status update posted by the Agency and some of the comments:

Hi all parents!
If the Swedish Social Insurance Agency has received your application for parental allowance on time and if the application was complete, compensation will be paid these days.
• if the parent was born in days 1-10 July 25
• if the parent was born in days 11-20 July 26
• if the parent was born in days 21-31 July 27

Comment by Sara, 1:28 pm
I should have my payment the 26th, but still there is no registration for payment when I log on my pages? When will it be there?

Comment by Jenny, 1:29 pm
Sara I think you can see it one day before never earlier

Comment by Amanda, 1:34 pm
Sara, you can never see this before payment. It will be registered for you on the 26th

Comment by Charlie, 1:34 pm
I usually see it several days before and they even send text message the day before :-) I rarely have had any trouble for the seven years I, on and off, have been on the parental money :-)

Sara had a question refereeing to the information posted by the Agency and in six minutes she got responses by three unknown parents on how the e-service system and payment works. Even if the answers are not completely in line, there is a common impression that this is a form of support among users of the same welfare service. Even this can be seen as a peer supporting strategy among citizens at the output side of the political system. They are supporting each other
and explain the process of a complicated policy that provides welfare support. They are even defending the work of the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and their work. This can even be seen as if the users are here improving the legitimacy of the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, the critics are managed in a moment and there are also success-stories told.

**Internet patients as informed citizens**

The illustrations from the parental leave system showed how citizen inform each other in a situation that is new for most people. Another type of critical situation in life is if you have a serious illness. Public health care is a core of the output side of welfare states. The extensive patient groups with discussion forums are an international phenomenon. Such discussions are both supporting the individual to strive on and they refer to medical care as well as other public welfare support, as sickness leave and care. One such example is the [www.cancerforums.net](http://www.cancerforums.net) where several different discussions refereed to among other issues living with cancer and treatments. Similar discussions are common in forums for specific illnesses like migraine, rheumatoid arthritis and fibromyalgia. In a discussion forum for rheumatoid arthritis (web 4) there was a story on how to convince a general practitioners to refer medical specialists.

**Today have been a good day! (Loppan 2010-10-31, 21:24)**

Since I'm going to a new doctor for another examination on Wednesday, so, I'm of course almost completely pain free today.

It's obviously very nice but unfortunately I tend to forget how much pain I usually have when I have my good days!

**Response 1: AnnaLundin, 2010-11-01, 22:19**

A good suggestion might be to keep pain diary, it gives a more accurate picture of how you have it and make it easier for you to tell your doctor as well.

I have also recognized that I'm almost well when I come to my doctor. I can surely say that the time that I had a "worst day ever" when I was with a rheumatologist, saw my doctor how bad it actually could be and THEN they finally took hold of the matter in a better way.

**Response 2: Loppan 2010-11-04 18:02**

A pain diary is good. I have done that before, but after a while I got tired. It felt like I just sat and thought about where it hurt. Felt a bit hypochondriac.

Though I had a good day when I was at the doctor, she wrote a referral to a rheumatologist. But I will write down the most important in a diary now that I can take me there and really show it in the next step. Thanks!

This shows how citizens inform each other to get a good and expected response by the health care professionals. The informed citizens can make better decision, but also demand more
services and in more competent ways express his/hers or others demands and needs. Through interaction like this the informed Internet-patient may learn about new treatments and what has worked for others. Some of them even read open access medical research. Thereby they may even ask their general practitioner about the latest treatment from the research front. If the patient is not given the claimed treatment her trust in public health care may be challenged. In a second step even the trust and legitimacy towards the welfare state is challenged.

Implications
Even if these are indeed brief examples and ad hoc illustrations of how citizens uses digital forum as tools to encourage and support each other in relation to welfare provision, we will take them as a starting point for some more theoretical conceptual discussions. These examples are far from a valid study but they point out some interesting indications.

The first impression is that this is all about people, and people with problems. They give quite an altruistic impression of sharing and helping each other. The support within these groups is generous. They do focus on their rights as citizens but also as persons with special needs and demands. The help to understand and explain what their rights are both in formal terms and also what is ok in social terms. The third impression regards the policies of the welfare state. There are few references to legislation or other formal documents. It is rather the idea of the success story or the good example that is the main argument in most cases. They help each other to translate the meanings of policies and practices both on-line and other services. The processes are in focus. Even to defend the public agency as a part of the process orientation was interesting in the parental leave case on Facebook. The processes at the out-put side might be legitimating the outcome as well.

It is also worth noticing here that most names used give a female impression, even if not all signatures used are possible to define as either male or female. This might be the case since we have selected discussion forums focusing on parental and health issues, which might interest women more. However, it is important to further consider how gender and other social categorizations are made up in these contexts. The approach of empowerment do also have to open up who is disadvantaged in these types of contexts, since traditional positive resources might not always will be regarded as resources here.

We expected to find more explicit references to a territorial disembedding of the citizens in the digital forums, but there were few like the discussion on childcare in different municipalities. There are overall few comments on locality and geographical position in these forums, but there
is indeed comparisons made by citizens in different situations. We thus have to further elaborate on how to make the territorial challenge visible and articulated.

To reach and form a more extensive and valid picture of processes of this type we will in the end of the paper outline a design of an empirical study. But before that we will further elaborate on some theoretical and conceptual meanings of legitimacy.

**Legitimacy as trustworthy government**

Legitimacy is formed in trustworthy processes following legal and institutional arrangements. Procedures – how public debates, elections and governmental activities are performed – are a core aspect of legitimacy in combination with faith in common value systems. The input side of the political system has been in focus for analysis of legitimacy, focusing on the representation of the citizen’s and public values and ideas.

**Values and trust as legitimacy**

A society’s value system is transformed into the governmental system on the input side of the political system. Policies are expressions of values and legitimate when the government manage to form policies in harmony to common core values. A commonly used definition of legitimacy is Lipset’s (1981, p. 64) formulation “legitimacy involves the capacity of the [political] system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate for the society”. However, at the out-put side of government legitimacy is also formed through the services provided, organisational structure and its practice. Decisions within the political system are supposed to be made in line with the legal framework and public opinion to be legitimate. In particular decisions made in relation to individual citizens on the output side administration (Kumlin & Rothstein 2005). In welfare states the provision of public services becomes a crucial aspect of the impression of legitimacy of the state in general (Rothstein 2008). The examples above indicate new forms of digital formed and expressed values regarding public welfare services. The examples also show how individuals discuss and pay attention to single decisions.

Legitimacy relates to power relations and organization of authoritarian power in society in general. Beetham (1991) argues that there are three dimensions of legitimate power: conformity of rules, the coherences of rules and shared beliefs, and the relation to power. Stoker (1998) argues that a legitimacy deficit will undermine public support, trust in policy and public administrative changes. Low legitimacy also undermines the ability to cooperate and promote
partnership. Thus the organisation of government and its public administration and services in particular carries the pre-conditions for legitimacy. In line with such general statements emerging digital contexts has to be used to sustain and develop legitimate governance and e-government. The digital era changes the interaction in the interface of public administration and may even challenge the legitimacy of public services.

Models of legitimacy in public administration
Rothstein (2009:311) argues that: “Legitimacy turns out to be created, maintained, and destroyed not at the input but at the output side of the political system”. Thus the use of electronic governmental interaction at the output side of the political system is an important aspect of political legitimacy. The out-put side in relation to e-government included very different activities. There are complex services like application systems made fully on-line, in Sweden like study grants, application to university program and income tax declarations (for most citizens). But there are also simple digital information regarding services provided in other ways like information on the opening hours for childcare, recycling stations and police offices. All these types of activities still can create, maintain, and may even destroy legitimacy for government in general.

Rothstein (2008) has formed a model of five models for legitimacy of public administration as the output side of the political system. The five models are bureaucracy, profession, corporatism, pseudo-market and lottery and they all have different principles and basis of legitimacy, as summarized in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Bureaucracy</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Corporatism</th>
<th>Pseudo-market</th>
<th>Lottery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basis of legitimacy</td>
<td>General rules</td>
<td>Evidence based expertise</td>
<td>Equal group representation</td>
<td>Choice and public regulation</td>
<td>Equal chances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>Collegial</td>
<td>Multi-partite</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main actor</td>
<td>Public official</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>Producer</td>
<td>Lottery overseer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Five models of political legitimacy, part of Rothstein’s model 2008, p.20
Rothstein’s models of legitimacy (2008) do not refer to digital settings and the principles and models of legitimacy have to be further developed in this perspective. An obvious impression, as shown above as well, is that the citizen becomes a more central actor in digital settings. If the citizen will take on a new main role or will be complementing the other main actor is an indeed critical issue of legitimacy and has to be addressed both conceptually and empirically. A first tentative extension of the model into e-government contexts is outlined here. In the bureaucratic model the citizen’s will do part of the administration and in collaboration with smart digital systems they will be able to calculate for example taxes, different fees or benefits. The e-governmental systems can transfer general rules that citizen can translate and apply. But the power is still hierarchical since there are few openings for flexibility in this type of model for legitimacy. However, in the professional model of legitimacy the citizen’s competence may make her appear as professional, not at least in all e-governmental application based on co-production. The Corporatism model may develop in line with new formed social relations and organization but probably more deliberative than representative. E-government has often been related to New Public Management, which is also the fourth legitimacy model by Rothstein. The e-governmental systems both open for a management of the pseudo-markets and the use of Internet give the citizens possibilities to make less uninformed choices. If, and than how, these ideas of extending the meanings of legitimacy models are relevant has to be both empirically and theoretically further analyzed and conceptualized.

The model above neither refers to legitimacy by common values and empowerment of individual citizens. However, above we have illustrated the importance and practice of such activities above. Empowerment of citizens could be seen as a core value of social policies and the welfare state and as such it might even develop into a basis of legitimacy. The networked organization of the Internet in general and on-line communities in particular is also challenging all of the models above since hierarchy, knowledge and relation are formed in new ways. Thus the digital settings are challenging legitimacy.

Models of Legitimacy challenged
The fundamental importance of e-developments is arguably that it challenges traditional models for central political concepts such as legitimacy, legality and influence, empowerment and power. This challenge consists above all in the fact that territory has been a basic dividing principle for government both on the input side of government and on the output side. Currently we can witness a withering of this principle on different levels of government. On the international
arena, flows of money, commodities (trade) and workers has been facilitated through international treaties and the development of super-national organs with increased power as in the case of the European Union. There is a vast literature on what this development means for concepts such as national citizenship. Issues on what democratic citizenship beyond the nation state would look like have been increasingly discussed. Research has pointed at a number of point where traditional conceptualizations clash with the diminished importance of territory. Several authors turn to discourse theory and ideas of deliberative citizenship to find solutions to the problems that arise in the new environment.

For example, Eva Erman has pointed (2006) at several points where nation-state methods for democratic accountability, basically through linking political decisions to citizens preferences through representative institutions, meet obstacles in a post-nation-state world: for example it excludes people without clear citizenship and the goal of interaction are often related to the phenomenon of nation-state. Erman suggest that deliberative structures of accountability in relation to human rights would be a way to establish global accountability structures.

The discussions on the implications of territorial destabilization largely move on the international arena. On this level, issues of accountability and democratic influence as well as inclusion are problematized in regard to basic civil rights. However, the destabilization of traditional modes of democracy also proceeds on a lower level of analysis, where a different set of policies are addressed and produced; welfare state related policies. There are discussions about the emergence of a global civil society on the input side of policy (Thörn, 2007), social movements, but this discussion has not been extended to include the output side by way of example, patient associations.

**Legitimate e-government (?)**
E-government as a socio-technical system is formed in the cross-point between digital technology and public organizations, as public administration, authorities, parliament and even political parties. These are based in, and build their legitimacy on, democratic values such as participation, legal certainty and efficiency, and general policy objectives such as growth, transparency and sustainable development. Such values, norms and goals are constructed in e-government settings both through social and technical processes and meanings.
Legitimacy is at the core of interaction among people, organizations, technologies and the institutions of societies. Thus the setting of the information society challenges the meanings of legitimacy. Technology has to be considered as a co-actor in the forming of legitimacy for government in general and for e-government in particular. Technology can in these respects be seen as a system, a tool and a resource (Orlikowski 1992). In all these three aspects technology can challenge the meanings of legitimacy and such an modelling may also add to Rothstein’s five models as discussed above.

E-government is based on mutual interaction between technical and social arrangements, which can be seen as a socio-technical system (see eg. Bijker et al 1989; Hughes 1983; Reddick 2010). Theories of socio-technical systems indicate that they are constructed and given meaning in the interplay between technical and social components of the systems. Information and communication technology (ICT) was initially recognized to have tremendous administrative potential e.g. these technologies could help governments provide information, create service delivery, and improve efficiency and effectiveness as e-government (eg Irani et.al. 2007). Implementation of e-government has often also been associated with increased citizen availability to public e-services, but it also entails a fundamental organizational change in public organizations (Grönlund, 2001; Heeks 1999; 2006).

In general, there are strong beliefs in and expectations about the potentials of e-government and its future possibilities (Heeks & Bailur 2007). The faith in constant improvement is almost built into the model itself (Grönlund & Andersson 2006). This positive belief in technology has to be matched with sound skepticism towards technology and administrative practices in order to maintain democratic values and legitimacy (Palm & Wihlborg 2006). Dunleavy et al (2005) argues a radical change and launch the concept of "digital-era governance" (DEG), relating to a broader perspective of public management and services beyond e-government also including organizations and activities outside direct policy-driven activities – a governance approach. They argue that DEG integrates functions from a holistic and user-oriented perspective by digitizing administrative processes. Thus new forms of legitimacy have to be formed both in practice and in theory, as we will open for in the last section of this paper.

The (e-)Political System
The idea of the political system launched by Easton (1957) has been used already in this text, by separating the input side of resources as taxes, values and preferences among citizens in contrast
to the public services and goods provided on the output side of the system. This model can also be used to explain e-governmental activities. Most e-government project has public e-services as one outcome and an internal e-administration as another outcome (Bernhard & Wihlborg 2012). The whole illustration gives a picture of how the political system (upper part) can be seen in relation to e-government (lower part of picture, concepts in italics).

![The Political System Diagram](image)

**Figure 1: e-government in relation to the model of the political system**

At the input side of the political system citizens constitute the electorate and the tax paying collective and on the output side they are "consuming" the public goods and services. In the same way the digitalization of the political system forms different roles and types of e-governmental activities. E-democratic activities refer to when citizens are engaged in the democratic decision-making processes and strengthen democracy (Olsson & Åström 2006) and it often has a deliberative inspiration (Fountain 2001; Jaeger 2006). Public e-services on the output side refers to the delivery as well as information and organization of public services.

**Potential models of legitimate e-government**

The normative question of how legitimacy can be formed on the output side of a political system in general can be answered in two ways. Firstly, legitimacy can be generated through national institutions to make sure they democratically made regulate compliance. This is the kind of legitimacy that Max Weber summarized as the bureaucratic legitimacy. Secondly, the institutions
that implement policy can create legitimacy, and these institutions and related organization are handling locally flexible institutional allowing for adaptation to local needs and orders (Föllesdal, 2008). One hypothesis based on this argument is that the development of the Internet strengthen the legitimacy of national equality and make it more difficult for institutional solutions that generate legitimacy through local flexibility and responsiveness. The first part of this answer would ask for new or at least redesigned e-governmental institutional arrangements for a new bureaucratic legitimacy. The second answer demands a technological flexibility to open for local and individual adoption that can bridge digital divides and make even e-government inclusive and legitimate for “everyone everywhere (within the state)”.

Based on Rothstein’s (2008) model, as discussed above, we may open for new models of legitimacy in e-government. The general rules still have to be a basic postulate for all public services, and as such the services provided as well as information about them has to follow general rules. E-government may both contribute to more spread knowledge on general rules but also on praxis, as the illustrations of sharing cases in on-line discussions. There is also still as a need of professional competence that can be seen as the illustration when the Swedish Social Insurance Agency participate in on-line discussions and answers questions on-line. A corporatist approach to legitimacy could be formed if on-line communities could form representation of specific issues and groups, but the basic idea of Internet is rather the opposite. However, there might be a potential for client organizations to share information and communicate more efficient. The model of pseudo markets develops and is sometimes even seen as related to e-government (Dunleavy et al 2005). The lottery model may also have a new potential in e-government (even if there are no oblivious examples for us now).

These models could also be related to the three perspectives hinted on in the illustrative cases above. Firstly, the interpretations of social rights in the interface a globalized digital society and a mature welfare state. Secondly, the how and which welfare policies that are in use legitimated in digital contexts. And, finally, there are implications on how legitimacy is gained through the processes of interaction among citizens and public agencies. These modeling ideas will be further developed in the outlined research project.
A proposed project

Based on the discussion above we plan to form a more extensive research project including empirical cases studies as well as extending the theoretical conceptualization. At the moment we see three core research questions:

- How can the conceptual challenges of digital government extend the meanings of legitimacy, in particular the issue of non-territorial bounded interests and values? (conceptualization)
- How are client based originations formed in digital contexts? (mapping of on-line organization)
- How are interaction and communication in client-based communities formed and expressed in relation to public welfare providers? (analyses of deliberation and empowerment)

The first part is a conceptual analysis in which we theoretically elaborate on how the virtual forms of client based welfare service-provider changes the commonly accepted models for how the relationship citizen-government works and how legitimacy is created. The ability to mobilize commitment lays the foundation also for emerging groups based in a shared client state, associations and groups that exchange information. In non-territorially based communities of interest, people with interests that were previously excluded because they were thinly scattered, have increased power through the Internet creates a new much larger community. The non-territorially based community of interest, thus, differs as a model from the territorially based, in part because the former offers a more direct connection to the power of those groups who are able to discern it. Such organizations can empower citizens and with the support of the client group quickly learn about the various funding opportunities or practices of the authorities in different parts of the country. These options have a restorative function (empowering) for the individual and also a claim-generating function of the state. The conceptual analysis is to discuss theoretically and conceptually about the commonly accepted models for the relationship client - the state needs to be reassessed to reflect the changing.

The mapping of client groups on-line and virtual communities of citizens be broad and open through browsing of discussion forum and follow up registers of off-line client organizations. Such a survey could be conducted through the Internet and then be able to compare what was the off-line situation, for example in the 1970th. The important empirical question for the conceptual study is the impact of the described challenges and the changing models may in practice. One could approach this issue empirically and examine actual changes in patterns of influence between different groups. Another option is to leave the mapping ambition and instead
provide illustrative examples of how these new forms of influence alter citizen’s power and legitimacy of the state. The latter requires rather a strategic choice approach where the goal is to present the varying circumstances that differs from traditional functional cases.

The aim is firstly to identify the "associations" that exist, how long they existed, how many people are involved, what purpose they have, etc. Based on the survey, we can make a rough estimate of the variation of the contents of various e-initiatives. Based on this analysis, we could select a number of associations for further qualitative study, when we interviewed the key players, if possible, some individual participants (possibly in focus groups on-line). We really want to use the interviews to illustrate the mechanisms of legitimacy, legal certainty and power and influence in the virtual civil society. Such a detailed study can provide insight into whether the mechanisms that generate power for client groups in the virtual civil society is different from how these processes go to the traditional – it is for example so that policy entrepreneurs have a more important role they can operate over a territorially unlimited area (Uhrwing, 2001)?

Some concluding remarks and further confusions
By this discussion we have attempted to reach show that legitimacy of e-government can and should also be elaborated on at the output side of the political system. The discussion is just opened up and this paper is far from coherent and closed. The work with this paper has opened up and showed several more confusing challenges and contradictions than we first thought of.

The territorial ground of the state legitimacy still has to be addressed in more advanced and meaningful ways. Even if we didn’t managed to do that in this paper we still believe there are indeed important points to make here for the discussion on legitimacy. A core problem of this argumentation that we have not been able to address and knit together is the basic issues of legitimacy in non-territorial based e-government and legitimacy in relation to output side legitimacy. The issues are related but they might have to be addressed in different ways, it might not be possible or not even appropriate to address them together.

We look forward to your comments when we meet in Bergen! Thanks for your time!
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