

## **Tema: Internet og demokrati**

### **Theme: Democracy, Governance and New Public Spheres**

The team explores the role which digital media, in particular the Internet, play in the reconfiguration of political authority, community and identity in an increasingly globalized world, and the challenges this development poses for politics and democracy. In exploring these issues the focus is on the new mediated forms of political steering (governance), political communication and political participation and empowerment, which have developed during the last 10 years.

The team approaches its subject primarily through a number of exemplary case studies. One cluster of projects looks at new forms of transnational organisation and regulation in order to understand ICT-mediated forms of globalized governance. The projects look at networks created “from above”, by elite configurations in various countries and organizations, but also on civil society movements or types of organization “from below”, as for example the open-source movement and the anti-globalization movement ATTAC.

Another cluster of projects look at these processes in a local perspective. The projects explore how ICT is becoming an integral part of new steering and urban planning techniques, and how ICT is used in the interaction between municipality and citizens in attempts to strengthen citizen participation and influence. A central feature in these projects is the analysis of the extent to which these new mediatized practices are able to improve democracy locally by creating for example new publics, give citizens new or improved political competencies, and suggest new ways of thinking about local democratic processes.

The team has elaborated a common theoretical framework in order to understand how the new media/the new public spheres serve to mediate between the global and the local, and between political authority and community. Our point of departure in creating such theoretical framework is that the Internet is a very important driver in the creation of new political authorities, communities and identities, and in the transformation of existing authorities, communities and identities; a joint process for which we think the term “reconfiguration” is apt. Central concepts and references in this framework are the concepts of “communicative affordances” (Hutchby, 2001), “representation” (Barnett, 2003), “political authority” (Easton, 1953, Held & McGrew, 2002) and “situated practices” (Slevin, 2002).

The integration between the subprojects is established through this common theoretical framework, but also through a common focus on the implications of the mentioned reconfiguration for the ways in which politics is conducted, and the enormous challenges this poses for our basically nationally organized democracies.

Apart from the different subprojects, the team is working on two edited books with the preliminary titles:

- Digital Dreams and Digital Fears. The reconfiguration of authority, community and identity in the network society.
- Informationsteknologi og demokratisk innovation. Styring, politisk kommunikation og borgerdeltagelse.

Both books are planned for publication by Samfundslitteratur in fall 2005.