MPs, decision making and ICT
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The better our MPs are able to use ICT, the better our democracy functions, enabling the Eduskunta to produce higher-standard democracy services.
Content

Basic information
Solutions offered by ICT
ICT services for MPs
Impact of ICT tools
Basic facts

- unicameral parliament
  - established 1906
- 1000 users
  - 200 MPs + 200 assistants + ...
- ICT: total cost 8% of parliament’s budget
- ICT office: 25 people
- 50 information systems:
  - parliamentary affairs register (1989-)
  - session hall systems (1992-)
  - fulltext archives (1994-)
  - diaries
  - systems for sessions
  - administrative systems
  - intranet/internet web-services (1995-)
  - ..........

• HW:
  - 950 PCs (XP)
  - 550 laptops (XP)
  - 48 servers
  - switched LAN (82 switches)
  - WLAN (53 connection points)
My research problems and questions

- What ICT tools are and have been available for the work of MPs and the Eduskunta?
- How and for what purpose have MPs utilised ICT tools?
- What impact has the use of ICT tools had?
More questions

• What benefits have actually been derived from the Eduskunta's ICT investments?

• In what direction should the Eduskunta develop its ICT services in future?

• Is it possible to increasingly strengthen our reliance on electronic information instead of traditional printed information?

• Has communication become smoother with the aid of modern communications equipment?

• Has ICT made it easier for MPs to do their work?
MPs’ roles and work
MPs’ roles

Parliamentarian

Legislator

Party Actor

Representative

Efficiency
Using ICT to improve performance

Publicity
Using ICT as communications and marketing tool

Democracy
Using ICT to establish democratic connections

ICT purpose

(Coleman, EPRI)
Roles, work, ICT

• How ICT supports all these roles and tasks?
  – Or more generally, how all services offered by Parliament office give support to MPs?

• Is our goal only keep wheels running in law making process? Is it enough?
MPs’ work?

(Mintzberg 1991)
MPs’ work?
Decision making?
Summary and conclusions of the study (1)

• ICT tools (research question 1)
• Research result: The ICT tools on offer to MPs are quite unremarkable basic devices and services. No specific tools have been developed to assist MPs in their work. Shortcomings are found particularly in solutions related to participation opportunities. The tools do not form an easy-to-use and integrated totality.

• Conclusion: The design of ICT services and tools for MPs must be more oriented towards the needs of MPs. Solutions that promote participation demand special attention. The ICT solutions of the Eduskunta rate well in international comparisons.
Summary and conclusions of the study (2)

• ICT tools (research question 2)
• Research result: MPs use basic ICT tools quite a lot, on average several hours per day. Low utilisation of the services available on the intranet and Internet is quite worrying. Use of laptop computers is low. Problems in the use of ICT are encountered fairly often.
• Conclusion: Developing the ICT competence of MPs is in need of greater attention than it now receives. Existing network services and the benefits they offer must be brought to the fore more clearly. Services should be profiled according to user needs.
• ICT tools (research question 3)
• Research result: Clear benefits are derived from the use of ICT, but the services on offer could be utilised even more. Cooperation between MPs and their assistants has become considerably easier. Substantial benefits could be derived from certain new ICT solutions. The electronic alternatives to documents, post, etc. are beginning to become more popular than the traditional formats. Maintenance of parallel services is a source of inefficiency.
• Conclusion: Services, network services in particular, must be marketed more actively than at present. Special attention must be focused on early adopters. The Eduskunta should embrace electronic services and stop providing parallel traditional formats.
Summary and conclusions of the study (4)

- Democracy
- Research result: Based on their www pages, MPs employ fairly primitive methods of online influencing. There’s plenty of development potential in this respect. The voting advice applications on offer at election time are good examples of how rapidly online influencing is developing.
- Conclusion: MPs and the Eduskunta must decide whether they are going to be passive observers or if they will actively strive to develop new solutions themselves. The Eduskunta should be a lively actor in the development of democracy services.
• Work of the Eduskunta

• Research result: The Eduskunta’s working practices are in need of modernisation.

• Conclusion: The weaknesses of existing working practices will not be erased with ICT. A substantial modernisation of activities is instead required.
ICT is used, 5-6 hours/day but…
What are results?

Could there be better results?

Support for different roles and tasks?
ICT: transformative power

• ICT is a tool for restructuring and reorganizing (organizations and processes). ICT is now both an enabler and a powerful mover.
• Technology has changed people (only tools change behavior…)

what was not possible before (too expensive), is now the only possibility… (only cheap enough… AND only good enough!)

• However: If you automate parliament processes as such, you will only get the parliament cemented by ICT (with high costs).
Role of Parliaments?
Role of ICT in Parliaments?

- Continue to be…
  traditional, formal, inflexible, static, bureaucratic, hierarcical… organ of government

- OR become…
  innovative, empowering, networked political strength, which offers democratic services to citizens?

- …AND what ICT [people] can do?
  Should we do something?
Our future: Satisfied MPS?
"IT will do my job!"