Covering distance
Dedicated to my grandfather
Ulf Karlsson (1923–2009)
MARTIN KARLSSON

Covering distance
Essays on representation and political communication
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Abstract


Political representatives’ democratic legitimacy rests on their ability to cover the distance between themselves and citizens. Representatives must avoid being perceived as distant and aloof from the needs and wishes of those they represent. The aim of this thesis is to increase the understanding of how new forms of communication with citizens, through participatory initiatives as well as political blogging, are used by politicians in their roles as representatives. Underlying this aim is the question of whether new forms of communication can contribute to reducing the distance between representatives and citizens. The central argument of this thesis is that such types of communication aid representative democracy only to the extent that they offer representatives efficient channels for performing functions related to political representation.

This study presents a theoretical framework that identifies potential functions of communication between representatives and citizens for political representation. Its empirical analyses, presented in five articles, find that representatives widely communicate with citizens through participatory initiatives and political blogging to aid their roles as political representatives. Furthermore, results show that representatives’ communication is significantly determined by strategic, practical, and normative factors. The representatives are found to act strategically as communication practices are adapted to accommodate their particular situations, needs and normative orientations.

Keywords: Political Representation, Political Communication, Participatory Initiatives, Political Blogging.

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Förord

Mot slutet av avhandlingstiden, när alla spretande tankar och analyser tillslut började bilda en (någorlunda) sammanhållen bok, tänkte jag ofta tillbaka på hela den här underliga perioden i mitt liv. En bild som om och om igen dök upp i mitt huvud var pantomimartisten i John O'Tarrells novell *Gå i motvind*. Novellen följer en pantomimartist som i tonåren får ta med sina storögda vänner på festivaler där han uppträder och de tar plats i publiken. Åren går och vännerna växer upp medan pantomimartisten fortsätter på sin inslagna bana. Scenerna krymper, liksom publik och gaget men han fortsätter oförtrutet med sina kryptiska skådespel, alltmedan hans vänner skaffar familjer och karriärer.


 Först och främst vill jag tacka min huvudhandledare Joachim Åström. Jag hade inte kunnat drömma om en bättre handledare. Jocke har inte bara öst svidande men nödvändig kritik över allt jag skrivit under de här åren, och varit en inspirerande medförfattare till flera arbeten i och utanför avhandlingen. Han har också litat på min förmåga nog att låta mig ingå i en rad lärorika sammanhang, från projektansökningar till undervisning. Även om jag möjigen hade kunnat skriva en avhandling även med en annan handledare så hade jag aldrig kunnat ha så roligt eller varit i närheten av så förberedd på akademins alla utmaningar.


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Örebro den 29 oktober 2013
Martin Karlsson
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1 Introduction

The head of a great state has but one way of knowing the people whom he governs: to travel. He has but one way of making himself known to his people: to travel. Only travel puts the prince and the people in direct communication with one another. Some have said and believed that only through representatives can the people make the prince aware of their claims. When the prince travels, the people take charge of their own affairs. Under a prince who travels, there is more true and praiseworthy democracy than in all the republics in the world.

- Pierre Louis Roederer, advisor of Napoleon I

This quote from one of Napoleon Bonaparte’s advisors underlines the importance of fostering a closeness between rulers and the ruled through the only way available at the time: covering distances by travel. This thesis investigates the same central problem, although in a very different context. In contemporary democratic societies, aided by communication technologies and the mass media, distance is not so much physical as it is functional and mental. In this context, political representatives face problems of being perceived as distant and aloof from the needs and wishes of those they represent. The democratic legitimacy of representatives’ political actions relies to a great extent on their ability to cover this distance, in other words, their willingness to “travel.” As will be argued in this introduction, distance can be seen as a defining characteristic of representative systems of government, and the way this distance should be approached and handled has been at the heart of the debate surrounding representative democracy for ages.

In contemporary democracies, this fundamental debate has once again gained traction due to evidence of a decline in the legitimacy and support of representative institutions. While the technological opportunity structure for communication is greater than ever before, so is the demand for closeness, recognition, and communication among citizens (Rosanvallon, 2011, p. 171). This thesis approaches the debate through an analysis of new forms of communication between representatives and citizens, which may have the potential to strengthen the legitimacy of representative democracy.

1 Pierre Louis Roederer (1804) Des voyages des chefs de gouvernement. Quoted in Rosanvallon, 2011, p. 194
1.1 Representative democracy and distance

Inherent in representative systems of government is the existence of a distance between rulers and the ruled. This distance is created through the introduction of elected political representatives functioning as mediating actors between citizens and political decision-making (Brennan & Hamlin, 1999; Rehfeld, 2009, p. 214). The citizenry is neither physically present as decisions are made, nor do they have direct influence over these political decisions. This is the defining characteristic of a representative form of government: the source of the great success of representative democratic systems, as well as the origin of great controversy around the possibility to align representative government with democratic ideals (Held, 1997; Manin, 1997).

While earlier understandings of democracy saw the demos as synonymous with the decision-making body (either through universal suffrage or sortation, i.e. the appointment of decision-makers by lot), representative government introduced the idea that the demos could be made present in the decision-making process through representatives without being physically present (Pitkin, 1967; Runciman, 2007). Hence, the introduction of political representation in democratic governance simultaneously created distances between representatives and the represented and proposed mechanisms for covering these distances. However, the emergence of representative government posed the question of how distances could and should be covered. How can political representation be managed in a way that resolves the dilemma of distance between the demos and the democratic decision-making process?

Throughout the history of representative government, this question has found divergent answers. In the pre-democratic and early democratic eras of representative government, distance was upheld as an important feature of this form of government, which would guarantee the quality of decision-making (Manin, 1997). Elected representatives were chosen from a group of citizens with higher social standing and superior knowledge than the general public, and were thus believed to posses a greater ability to make wise decisions (Held, 1997, p. 142). These citizens, in the words of Madison, were those who, “[...] may best discern the true interest of their country.” (Madison, 1787). Burke, in his speech to the electors of Bristol (Burke, 1774), similarly argues for the case of sovereignty of political representatives, and their freedom from being instructed and controlled by the public. In accordance to this normative view, a representative must be free to make his or her own judgments regarding the best decisions for the demos as a whole. All forms of steering and control of decisions made by
representatives involve the risk of letting local or individual interests overshadow the interest of the nation or the people as a whole. Burke had a strong belief in the ability of elected representatives and the deliberation between them, to identify the common good, and a strong disbelief in the ability of citizens themselves to be able to put the good of the whole before their individual interests.

In contrast, other thinkers from the same era such as Montesquieu and Rousseau, underlined the important of the surveillance of elected representatives through public audits and censors. These institutions would create the possibility for public control of the activities of representatives and officials (Rosanvallon, 2008, pp. 87-92), and therefore increase the accountability of representatives to citizens. These two positions, the Madisonian/Burkean view arguing for the sovereignty of representatives, and the Montesquieu/Rousseau position in turn advocating a relationship between citizens and representatives characterized by surveillance and control, form the polar opposites of the debate up through the emergence of political parties.

The introduction of political parties is arguably the most important development in the history of representative democracy. This development changed the reasoning around political representation and the distance between citizens and representatives. In modern democracies, the relationship between the represented and representatives is complicated by the functions of political parties. Parties organize and steer representatives and take over much of the responsibility for communication with and accountability towards citizens. Consequently, political theoretical thought also changed from focusing on the individual representative to the political party as a whole. In the wake of the unification of the party systems of democracies, theoretical models, such as the responsible party model (RPM), were constructed and focus on the potential for parties to cover the distance between representatives and represented (Ranney, 1954). In accordance with this line of thinking, political parties create intermediate institutions in the relationship between voters and representatives that, in the best case scenario, offer distinct choices to voters through clear political platforms, and, once in office, organize their representatives to enact those platforms (Dahlberg, 2009). In prospect as well as retrospect, voters can evaluate the different parties’ political platforms and their ability to enforce the said platforms before making their electoral choice. This process transforms the responsibility of representatives from being accountable only to their voters to being accountable primarily to their party.
Judging by the relative stability of the position of parties in western democracies, as well as the growing importance of parties within systems of representative democracy throughout the 20th century, political parties have been successful in filling these functions. If the focus is instead put on the relationship between citizens and political parties, a radically different picture emerges. While political parties enjoy a strong and unthreatened position as the most influential organizations in representative democracies, many concurring trends indicate that their legitimacy for holding this position is weakening in the eyes of citizens (Katz & Mair, 1994). During this period, citizens have increasingly expressed trust towards, identified with, and joined as members of political parties (Holmberg, 1999a; Katz & Mair, 1994). These developments have altogether been called a crisis of political parties, and pose some critical questions for the legitimacy of systems of representative democracy that rely heavily on the functioning of political parties.

Rather than indicating a general undermining of democracy, these developments point to a major change in attitude and political practice within the citizenry of established democracies. While citizens have become increasingly critical towards established institutions of representative democracy, the overall support of democratic principles has remained strong (Norris, 1999). Similarly, while traditional forms of political participation, such as joining a party or an NGO and electoral participation have declined, the level of political engagement and interest, particularly in the Nordic countries, has remained strong (Andersen, 2006; Dalton, 2006, pp. 54-56). Hence, contemporary citizens are not giving up on representative democracy or civic engagement, but are placing new demands on established institutions and engaging in individualized and policy-oriented, rather than collectivistic and traditional, forms of participation. A key development for understanding this shift is the on-going individualization of citizens in western democracies (Inglehart & Welzel, 2010). In the wake of the structural changes of societies from an industrial to a post-industrial era, popular values have widely shifted focus. Rather than valuing physical and economic security, citizens increasingly endorse post-material values such as self-expression and autonomy (Inglehart, 2008). This so-called silent revolution has left civic culture increasingly at odds with established institutions and the practices of representative democracy that build on collectivistic ideals, as well as on group representation.

Not only the institutions but also the wider governance context of western democracies have been affected by these cultural developments. In the post-industrial era, the governance of modern societies has become in-
creasingly complex. The individualization of the citizenry and the growing significance of post-materialistic values have paved the way for an expansion of public policy into multiple new policy areas (Montin, 2007). Consequently, it has become less feasible to concentrate the knowledge and experience needed for policy decisions in only elected representatives and public administrations (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000). Instead these developments have sired what is sometimes termed a polycentric policy system (Hysing, 2010, p. 46; Ostrom, 1990). These systems are characterized by the inclusion of multiple actors in the governance of modern societies, public as well as private, organized in dispersed and independent governance units. Also, increasing demands have been placed on the inclusion of citizens and civil society actors in the policy making process through interactive policy making and network governance. This is an example of a growing demand for surveillance and control of representative institutions, and the reintroduction of a variety of censors and public audits heavily debated in the 18th century (Rosanvallon, 2008).

All in all, these developments paint a picture of growing pressure on the reinvigoration of representative democracy. As political parties and traditional political institutions have lost legitimacy, civic culture has evolved towards increasing individualism, and traditional state-centric forms of governing have increasingly been combined with new practices of governance. Modern societies seem to have outgrown party-centric systems of representative democracy based on collective identities and group representation. In other words, the preceding solution to the problems of distance in representative democracy has increasingly been deemed unfulfilling and insufficient.

1.2 New forms of communication: problem of distance revisited
In relation to these challenges for representative democracy, one reoccurring argument has been that the decaying legitimacy of political parties, as well as the complex nature of modern society, is calling for more inclusive and multifaceted forms of governance and policymaking (Arnstein, 1969; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000; Smith, 2009). Politicians must face these challenges by allowing citizens to participate more actively in the deliberation around public policies. This position is in no way consensually supported, either among scholars or in the political realm. Some critics even argue that these potential solutions may be more dangerous for democracy than the challenges they are created to meet (Blaug, 2002; Dalstedt, 2009; Esaiasson, 2010). However, most
western democracies have shown clear indications for a trend of experimentation with new forms of political communication and citizen participation in recent decades. There are numerous examples of local governments initiating different participatory initiatives: various forms of citizen participation on the side of traditional channels for public participation, for example *citizen councils*, or *public consultations* related to various policy processes (Article II; Smith, 2005 & 2009).

Also, in recent decades, information and communication technologies (ICTs) have opened a new window of opportunity for communication between citizens and politicians. The potential for direct communication through political blogs, social media, and electronic participation processes (e-participation) has increased in quantity as well as importance. These new forms of communication are argued to present a new opportunity structure for covering the distance between representatives and represented. ICTs create new channels for communication that manage the problem of geographical distance and time efficiency (Shahin & Neuhold, 2007, p. 391), and allows for decentralized communication between the represented and representatives that bypasses intermediate organizations, such as political parties (Coleman 2005a; Zittel, 2003). These technologies also offer new and effective structures for collective action in organizations and networks (Benkler, 2006; Bimber et al., 2012; Farrell, 2012) by lowering the costs for participation (Åström, 2001; Budge, 1996; Garrett, 2006) and providing new arenas for joint political action (Bimber et al., 2012).

Building on these merely technological and procedural promises of new forms of political communication and participation, scholars have argued for all new models of representative democracy and political representation centred on continuous communication between representatives and the represented (Coleman, 2005a; Norton, 2007; Zittel, 2003). This communication-centric view of political representation breaks away from earlier proposals of solutions for the problem of distance in representative democracy in at least two profound ways. First, rather than viewing the relationship between citizens and elected representatives as in-direct, managed through party competition and party identification (as in RPM models), and regulated primarily (or exclusively) through electoral accountability (as in all the earlier solutions discussed above), these models present an individualized form of political representation characterized by direct and continuous accountability through on-going communication. Hence, these normative
views of representation expand the focus from the electoral arena to the full electoral term. The time in between elections becomes important in its own right. In this view, representation is an activity that is on-going and performed between individuals rather than between parties and their voters. Second, and most important, these models stress the significance of communication between representatives and citizens as a practice central to political representation.

When these models of what might be termed interactive representation have been put to empirical scrutiny, the distance between normative ideals and empirical reality has been found to be vast. While many governments, both local and national have engaged in different forms of participatory governance, and politicians in many parts of the world have increasingly started to experiment with ICT-based tools for political communication (such as personal websites, blogs, and social media platforms), little empirical evidence points in the direction of new forms of representation based on on-going communication. Instead the opportunity structures created by new technologies and new forms of participation seem to compete with, and are to some degree found to be at odds with, the institutional incentives that regulate the actions of political representatives. Although existing institutions face grave challenges related to the broad developments in political culture discussed above, electoral systems, party culture, and ideological mind frames are again and again proving to intervene in attempts to reform political representation in a more interactive, individualized, and communicative direction.

Participatory initiatives have constantly been proven to be afflicted by low levels of involvement and engagement by politicians and parties (Article I; Copus, 2003; Granberg & Åström, 2010; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000; Montin, 2007; Sedelius & Åström, 2010). Likewise, political representatives’ engagement with ICTs has often proven to be hesitant and half-hearted (Article III; Benkler & Shaw, 2010; Stromer-Galley, 2000). In both cases, the apparent differences in logic between established institutions of representative democracy and these new channels for participation, as well as communication between representatives and citizens, are deemed to be the root of the problem. Stephen Coleman summarizes the issue regarding politicians’ blogging, as a conflict between two cultures:

Politicians live in a world of certainty and tribal loyalty which is at odds with the blogging ethos of open-mindedness and knowledge-sharing. As long as politicians are expected to be never in doubt and ever faithful to catechismic
party messages, their blogging efforts are always likely to look more like simulation than authentic self-expression (Coleman, 2005b, p. 276).

Dave McKenna similarly underlines the conflict between participatory mechanisms and the logic of representative democracy as the source of failure for participatory initiatives at the local level:

Despite the good intentions of the officials that support them, the outcomes of participative initiatives can only be given a relatively low democratic weight within any decision making process set in a representative framework. When encountering the outcomes of initiatives, policy-makers will be faced with a series of difficult practical challenges that flow from the fundamental differences between representative and participatory democracy. [...] At best, participatory initiatives are difficult to place within a representative framework and at worst they can compromise the legitimate democratic process (McKenna, 2011, pp. 1190-1191).

The important lesson from earlier studies of participatory initiatives and political representatives’ communication through ICTs (such as political blogging) is that these new forms of political communication cannot, with ease, be introduced in traditional institutions and systems of representative democracy. Such attempts have continuously faced the challenge of resolving the opportunities of communication with the institutional logics of political parties and representative democracy. It is against this background of the pessimistic outlook of earlier research that this thesis presents an attempt to contribute to our knowledge of how the problem of distance is managed in contemporary representative democracies.

This thesis will focus on the relationship between new forms of political communication and the incentives and logic of established institutions. The study explores how new forms of communication are used in the interaction between citizens and representatives, and explores questions related to how such practices can be understood theoretically as well as empirically. It employs a somewhat different perspective on how change occurs in comparison with earlier studies, dismissing the potential for revolutionary restructuring of the logic of established institutions through new forms of communication (cf. Coleman, 2005b) and instead investigating the potential for incrementalism as small tendencies for change in attitudes and behaviour that may lead to larger consequences (Agre, 2002; Wright, 2012).
1.3 Aim and research questions
The aim of this thesis is to increase our understanding of how new forms of communication with citizens, through participatory initiatives as well as political blogging, are utilized by politicians in their role as political representatives. It seeks to contribute to the understanding of what role the communication between citizens and representatives can perform in mending the challenges facing political representation in contemporary democracy. Specifically, the thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How do representatives communicate with citizens through participatory initiatives and political blogging in order to aid central functions of political representation?
2. What factors explain differences in representatives’ communication with citizens through participatory initiatives and political blogging?

Guided by the first research question, the thesis can contribute to the knowledge of how political representatives use new forms of communication to strengthen their role as representatives. In this relatively novel field of research, we still know very little about the connection between new forms of communication and political representation. An exploration of the second question creates opportunities for a greater understanding of the factors and mechanisms that guide representatives’ engagement with communication in these arenas. Such an understanding is important not the least for two reasons. First, it makes possible empirical examinations of the potential incompatibility between new forms of communication and a culture of party loyalty among representatives (described above). Second, in understanding what factors explain differences in representatives’ communication, we can learn more about the potential for future change. If differences among representatives are attributed to factors that tend to be stable over time, the outlook for change is slimmer than if such differences are related to factors that tend to vary over time.

1.4 Structure of the thesis
The remainder of the thesis is structured as follows. Three theoretical chapters will follow this introduction. First, the theoretical developments within the field of political representation are presented and discussed in chapter two. This chapter aims, apart from summarizing the development
and main positions within this field, to bring more clarity to two issues: (1) the relationship between participation, political communication and representation, and (2) the potential functions of communication between representatives and citizens in divergent ideals of representation. Chapter three explores participatory initiatives and political blogging, the two arenas in which the relationship between representation and political communication are analysed. In chapter four the explanatory perspectives explored in the empirical studies are presented. One strategic-, one practical and one normative perspective is outlined and discussed.

The subsequent methods chapter presents the empirical studies conducted and the overreaching analytical design employed in the thesis. The argument is made that in this particular phase of development within the research field, characterized by a multitude of single case studies in divergent settings, there is a need for strategic and theory driven quantitative analyses in critical settings. In the concluding chapter (6), the results of the different studies are presented in summary and a concluding discussion is offered to supply answers to the research questions presented above, leading to a discussion of the broader implications of these studies.
2 Political representation

Political representation has been depicted as a “misleadingly simple concept” (Dovi, 2008). Everyone seems to know what it is but at the same time few can agree on any one definition of political representation. Similarly, Pollak (2007) depicts representation as “an overloaded signifier, open for almost any use and interpretation, but still regarded as one of the most important facets of democracy.” In his “Introduction to Democratic Theory”, Henry B. Mayo even recommends that theorists stop using the concept all together due to it having become too complex (Mayo, 1960, p. 95; Rehfeld, 2011, p. 631). Still, as Hanna F. Pitkin notes, “he (Mayo) has continued to use it just the same, as if he know perfectly well what it meant” (1967, p. 6).

The contested nature of the concept is understandable in relation to its central position in democratic theory and governance. All modern democracies are representative democracies in the sense that they build on institutions through which citizens’ preferences and interests influence public policy through political representatives. The relationship between citizens and elected representatives is arguably the most important relationship within a democratic political system. The legitimacy of a system relies to a great extent on the alignment between the decisions made by its legislative branch and the preferences and interests of its citizens. Different conceptions of how this relationship should function, i.e. the normative debate surrounding political representation, explains part of the contested nature of the concept (Burke, 1774; Coleman, 2005a; Eulau et al., 1959; Mansbridge, 2003, 2009 & 2011; Phillips, 1995; Pitkin, 1967). The concept, however, is also contested on a more fundamental level.

A mere descriptive debate regarding what political representation is and is not has arisen in latter years. The traditional understanding of political representation has focused exclusively on elected or appointed representatives, defining representatives as agents speaking and acting on behalf of a principal in accordance with a mandate given from that principal through electoral appointment. Recent theoretical contributions to the literature have challenged this narrow scope and added, to the concept of representation, actions of self-appointed representatives claiming to represent others in their acts and statements, thus giving rise to concepts like “citizen representatives” (Warren, 2008), “representative claim-making” (Saward, 2006), and “surrogate representatives” (Mansbridge, 2003). Also, traditional theoretical accounts of political representation have been criticized for being limited exclusively to democratic representation, failing to sup-
ply concepts and models for understanding non-democratic forms of representation (Rehfeld, 2009 & 2011). Such forms of representation could be the representation of non-democratic states in the UN or the form of representation that occurs when an NGO claims to represent prisoners of war (Rehfeld, 2009). These are forms of representation that function without the appointment of representatives through an election or any function of popular accountability. This criticism has led to the construction of broad descriptive theoretical frameworks that divorce representation from the context of representative democracy. In this theoretical review of the concept, we will limit our scope by excluding this descriptive debate, and instead focus exclusively on the normative debate about how democratic representation should function.

As previously explained in the introduction, the existence of a distance between elected representatives and voters can be seen as an inherent consequence of the upscaling of democratic systems of government to mass democracies. When democratic principles move beyond the small communities, in which all citizens affected by common decisions can attend and participate in the processes of making those decisions, to modern size municipalities, regions, nations, and transnational institutions, the feasibility of self-representation is lost. Political representation can hence be said to be the cause of the distance between individual citizens and the decision-making procedures that affect their lives, but can also be seen as institutions that aim to limit or cover this distance. The central aim of representative institutions in democratic systems can be defined as making citizens’ preferences and interests present in decision-making procedures in which the citizens themselves cannot be present, or as Pitkin defines representation, “to make present again” (Pitkin, 1967, pp. 153). Most (although not all) theorists and scholars of political representation can agree on this simple definition, but there are still numerous and conflicting ways of understanding how this process of “making present again” (descriptively) is or (normatively) should be functioning.

The scholarly debate around normative conceptions of political representation has given rise to a multitude of positions, often in the form of

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2 This developmental chain should be read as a purely theoretical, rather than historical, account of the development towards participatory democracy. In reality, the introduction of representative forms of democratic government cannot be understood as a process of upscaling direct democratic systems in larger nation states, but rather as a process of democratizing non-democratic systems of representative government.
different role concepts describing the various potential roles for political representatives. In a review of this literature, Pollak (2007) identifies no less than forty different roles or forms of representation, and reaches the conclusion that this great variation conceals, rather than clarifies, the concept of representation (p. 89). The introduction’s brief review of how this debate has played out historically will be expanded and deepened here. An attempt is made not to summarize and categorize all normative positions on political representation, but rather to structure the central dimensions of this debate. We will separate between and describe the three normative models of representation that are most prominent in the theoretical, as well as empirical, study of political representation to date.

2.1 Three models of political representation
In their seminal works, Heinz Eulau, Wahlke, Buchanan, and Ferguson analysed members of American state legislatures in relation to the distinction between trustee-, politico-, and delegate representatives (1959 & 1962). This distinction dates back to the most prominent normative and theoretical debate in the history of representative democracy, the so-called trustee-delegate (or mandate-independence) controversy (Burke, 1774; Pitkin, 1967; Rehfeld, 2009). The trustee and delegate models of representation create two opposing positions on the dimension between fully sovereign and fully steered representatives. The politico model of representation in Eulau and his colleagues’ framework represents a middle ground between these extreme positions, thus inhabiting influences from both ideals. While the politico model soon vanished from theoretical frameworks, as well as empirical analyses of representation, the trustee and delegate models are still, despite the great theoretical creativity described above, very much at the centre of this research field. An important addition to this duality is the party delegate model, which shares a strong resemblance with the delegate model, but with important additions that make this model useful for understanding political representation in party centric systems of representative democracy. In this section we aim to present and discuss these three contesting normative models of political representation: the trustee model, the delegate model, and the party delegate model.
2.1.1 The trustee model

A central debate related to the concept of representation has to do with the demarcation of who is or should be represented by a political representative. In other words, whose (or what) interests should a representative take into account? One important starting point for modern thinking related to this debate is the position of Edmund Burke (presented in short in the introduction), most clearly stated in his speech to the electors of Bristol in 1774. In this speech, Burke presents the foundation of what has in recent times been called a trustee model of representation (Eulau et al. 1959; Holmberg, 1974). He argues not only for the importance of the sovereignty of representatives in relation to the expressed wishes of their electorate, but also for the importance of the interest of the nation as a whole, as opposed to the interests of particular regions or cities within the nation. He famously stated that:

Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests; which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole; where, not local purposes, not local prejudices, ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole.

Burke’s advocacy for the sovereignty of representatives must be understood as a means for securing this end, rather than as an end in itself. In his speech, Burke actually argues for a close union between representatives and the represented characterized by on-going communication, but underscores that the representative must still stand by his own opinions. This opinion, Burke says, “he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living.” This line of argumentation stresses an important distinction between opinion and interest that will reoccur again and again in the normative theoretical debate on political representation (cf. Neblo et al., 2010; Pitkin, 1967). In Burke’s argument, this distinction plays a central role, as it emphasizes that common national interests or the good of the whole, is not achieved through a form of representation that seeks to mirror the different opinions of the citizenry within representative bodies. Instead Burke argues that the general good is best achieved when representatives are free to make up their own mind and then deliberate with other representatives in order to reach the decision that best satisfies the common interest of the nation. In this sense, a sovereign representative should not represent his own personal interests but rather the general in-
terests of the whole nation, and at the same time base his decision on his own opinion rather than on the opinions of his constituents.

There is clearly an elitist dimension to Burke’s argumentation, with strong connections to his later writings about the French revolution. He sees the masses as being incapable of ruling themselves and stipulates that placing power in the hands of the masses would create a government without direction and control (Pitkin 1967, p. 196). The elected representatives in Burke’s view are a “natural aristocracy,” made up of superior men with greater wisdom and judgment than ordinary citizens. In this sense, Burke’s position has a strong resemblance to his contemporaries’ in America (described in the introduction). Burke’s position, however, is both more specific and evolved than a strictly elitist view of democracy. It must be understood as a reaction against the tendency of members of parliament in Britain to protect and advocate for local and regional interests in order to secure their re-election through satisfying their particular constituents’ wishes. This, in Burke’s mind, led to the formation of a government in which “different and hostile interests” in different regions competed for influence over national policy. According to Burke, the victim of this competition was the good of the whole, constantly defeated by the good of the part. Although the principle of distinction in Burke’s argumentation was between national and regional interests, this argument can be translated to a discussion of the common good in relation to the good of a particular social class or a minority group within a country.

2.1.2 The delegate model
In complete opposition to Burke’s position stands the delegate model of representation, according to which the representative is seen as a delegate for the opinions of his constituents. Derived from the anti-federalist positions in relation to the US constitutional process, the delegate model of representation was formulated as a defence of representation on the basis of geographical interests. This created representatives that represented not the interest (or good) of the federation as a whole, but rather the interests of their specific state. As Dry (1994), puts it, “to the Anti-Federalists, the people would not be free for long if all they could do was vote for a representative whom they would not know and who would be very different from them” (p. 108).

The anti-federalists argued for small and homogenous electoral districts and representatives responsive to the wishes and interests of the local constituents. Also, they emphasized the importance of civic participation in
political and judicial processes at the local level in order to foster greater political knowledge and stronger citizenship among the people (Dry, 1994). In sum, they supported the combination of responsive representatives and active citizens. This model of representation, as it has been developed and defined on the basis of the original anti-federalist positions, is characterized by a mandate bound to the wishes of the constituents. A delegate is, unlike the trustee, not a sovereign actor free to translate his or her own judgment into legislative action, but instead a delegate of the preferences of the constituents. As such, the delegate is more responsive to the constituents’ sanctions and is willing to re-evaluate policy positions on the basis of the constituents’ opinions.

This model of representation, unlike the trustee model, requires an ongoing communication between representative and voter, not only at the time of the election, but also in between elections. Therefore the delegate model has traditionally been deemed more fitting for a representative democracy, as it has more elements of political participation and on-going communication throughout the electoral cycle (Zittel, 2003 & 2007). At the centre of this form of representation is the congruence of opinion between voters and representatives. Only when the opinion of the voters agree with policy actions taken by a representative can the delegate model of representation be seen as successful. Consequently, the delegate model presents a different interpretation of the problem of distance in representative democracy when compared to the trustee model. In order for the normative ideal for representative democracy presented by the delegate model to function successfully, the level of distance in terms of difference of opinion between the citizenry and the representatives must be minimal.

2.1.3 Theoretical development and criticism

Although the trustee-delegate dichotomy has enjoyed enormous influence over the empirical (cf. Eulau et al, 1959; Gilljam et al., 2010b; Holmberg, 1974; Wahlke, et al., 1962; Zittel, 2009a) analyses of political representation, this conceptual framework has not escaped criticism. Critics have addressed a variety of issues with this theoretical distinction, on both theoretical as well as empirical grounds (Holmberg, 1999b; Mansbridge, 2003, 2009 & 2011; Pitkin, 1967; Rao, 2000; Rehfeld, 2009 & 2011; Thomassen, 1994). It is difficult to find common ground in this criticism, as the trustee-delegate dichotomy has been deemed too broad (Holmberg, 1999b) and too narrow (Rao, 2000), too simplistic (Holmberg, 1974; Rehfeld, 2009; Thomassen, 1994) and too complex (Pitkin, 1967, p. 154).
The theoretically grounded criticism generally regards the framework as oversimplifying the concept of representation, thus creating models that fail to understand the potential variation of ideals among political representatives (Mansbridge, 2003, 2009 & 2011; Rehfeld, 2009 & 2011). In Rehfeld’s words, the dichotomy between trustees and delegates “collapses three distinctions […] and thus obscures the underlying complexity of the phenomenon” (2009, p. 214). These distinctions, presented here in the form of questions, are: (1) who is represented, the good of the whole or the good of the part (the representative’s specific constituents)? (2) what is the source of judgment, the representatives own judgment or the judgment of the constituents? and (3) how responsive is the representative to sanctions from his or her voters? (Adapted from Rehfeld, 2009). By stating that representatives can be either trustees or delegates, scholars assume that these distinctions create an inherently consistent system and the three dimensions are dependent on each other. It is thus assumed that a representative who aims for the good of the whole (a trustee) automatically must rely on his or her judgment and be unresponsive to voters’ sanctions. In contrast, the assumption is made that those representatives that aim for the good of their own constituents (a delegate) rely on their constituents’ judgment and are responsive to their sanctions.

In an attempt to overcome this oversimplification, Rehfeld presents a framework of not two but eight different models of representation, four subtypes of the trustee model and four subtypes of the delegate model (2009, p. 223). In accordance with this framework, representatives can follow normative ideals that combine features of the trustee as well as the delegate models of representation. Criticisms of Rehfeld’s approach are twofold. The eight-type framework has been criticized for being hard or even impossible to operationalize in empirical studies (cf. Mansbridge, 2011, p. 621 & 629). Although these eight forms of representation may be possible to distinguish on a purely theoretical basis and in normative debates, it is hard to find ways to distinguish them empirically on the basis of data on legislative action or attitude data among representatives. Secondly, the framework has been depicted as superfluous in relation to prior normative theoretical standpoints, as well as the positions of actual political representatives (Mansbridge, 2011; Remer, 2010, p. 1066). This form of criticism underlines the fact that normative ideals historically have “collapsed” the three sub-distinctions of the trustee-delegate controversy and treated them as inherently dependent dimensions (Remer, 2010). Also, critics stress that representatives seldom view the features of representation that form the basis for Rehfeld’s framework as independent. Rehfeld’s dimensions rarely “occur separately in real legislatures” (Mansbridge, 2011, p. 621).
Mansbridge shares Rehfeld’s criticism of the trustee-delegate dichotomy but reaches a different conclusion. She argues for abandoning the trustee and delegate models altogether rather than developing them. Mansbridge is open to a more dynamic framework, acknowledging that several divergent possibilities of legitimate political representation can coexist and denying the possibility of creating a framework that can effectively categorize the normative standpoints of representatives. Instead she argues that representatives constantly mix different forms of representation in their legislative action and deems it impossible to empirically derive what normative standpoint lies behind a specific action simply by observing the behaviour of representatives (2003, p. 515). Thus, her framework in a sense moves in the opposite direction from that of Rehfeld, towards a more contingent view of representation. Mansbridge creates distinctions between four models of representation, promissory-, anticipatory-, gyroscopic-, and surrogate representation (2003), that build not only on the action of the representative but simultaneously on the divergent actions of voters. This framework has been criticized for exchanging one set of overloaded and complex concepts (those of the trustee-delegate dichotomy) for another. Just as the trustee-delegate dichotomy collapses three different distinctions in the creation of a binary conceptual framework, Rehfeld argues that the framework put forward by Mansbridge also walks into the same trap by creating models of representation that take for granted the relationship between a representative’s sources of judgment and responsiveness to sanction (Rehfeld, 2009 & 2011). Another problem with frameworks that abandon the trustee-delegate controversy all together, similar to the one Mansbridge proposes, is that they divorce their conceptualization of the normative models of political representation from the tradition within the research field. As empirical scholars have gathered knowledge about political representation as understood by the trustee-delegate controversy for over half a century, adoption of new a framework decreases the possibility for comparisons to the accumulated knowledge on the topic.

Pitkin instead argues that the mandate-independence (or delegate-trustee) controversy creates a false dichotomy. In her view, neither of the end points of this dichotomy adequately fit the concept of representation (1967, p. 154). Political representation (defined as the “substantive acting for”) demands a measure of independence between citizens and representatives, as well as a certain level of navigating from citizens (pp. 209-210). Consequently, the trustee-delegate model is perceived as to complex. It suggests that two different roles of representation is possible to distinguish, while Pitkin withholds that representation is only possible in be-
between these extremes. According to Andeweg and Thomassen (2005, p. 508) Pitkin would define all representatives as Politicos—mixing elements of the trustee and delegate roles (Eulau et al., 1959).

The empirically grounded criticism is derived from the mere difficulty of making sense of the trustee-delegate dichotomy in empirical studies, both in attempts to explain the role taking (or adherence to these models) of representatives, as well as understanding the effects of such roles on political behaviour (Rao, 2000; Thomassen, 1994). Still, much disagreement remains regarding whether the framework being too simplistic (Rao, 2000) and fails to theorize the complexity of political representatives different roles, or instead too broad, misrepresenting the united character of representatives’ roles and actions (Holmberg, 1999b). While Rao (2000) agrees with Mansbridge (2003) that representatives migrate between different roles at different times, instead of adhering to a single comprehensive role of representation. Holmberg (1999b) argues that representatives (in a European political context), instead of being trustees and delegates, almost always act as party delegates following the positions of their parties rather than their own judgment or the wishes of their constituents. According to Holmberg, the trustee and delegate roles reflect the “wishful thinking” of representatives rather than their actual political activities.

While the debate and harsh criticism of the trustee/delegate dichotomy presents many different challenges and areas for theoretical development, one particular area of criticism, exemplified above by Holmberg’s argument, is important to take into account in this study. By incorporating Holmberg’s call for a third, more party-oriented model of representation into the framework, many of the weaknesses highlighted by other critics can be addressed as well. The inclusion of the party delegate model (presented below) increases the complexity of the trustee-delegate distinction, transforming it from a dichotomy to a trichotomy. This addition helps improve the empirical relevance of the framework in a European context as characterized by party-centric systems of representative democracy. Lastly, unlike the strategy of Mansbridge and others that proposed all new frameworks, vaguely related or unrelated to the trustee-delegate tradition, this solution creates opportunities to build on previous knowledge which has been accumulated in empirical and theoretical works. This is especially true in a European context for which the study of political representation has overwhelmingly employed the trichotomy between trustee, delegate, and party delegate (cf. Esaiasson & Holmberg, 1996; Gilljam et al., 2010b; Holmberg, 1974 & 1989; Wessels & Giebler, 2010).
2.1.4 The party delegate model
An important criticism of the trustee-delegate dichotomy is that this conceptual framework is ill-fitted to describe political representation in a party-centric system of representative democracy (Thomassen, 1994). As noted above, the trustee and delegate models of representation regard the representative relationship as one between individual voters and individual representatives. The theory has no room for the influence of party organizations. In order to adapt the framework to such contexts, European political scientists have added a third model of representation (Esaiasson & Holmberg, 1996; Holmberg, 1974; Thomassen, 1994; Wallin et al., 1981). The party delegate model is a variation on the delegate model, for which the party acts as the principle instead of the voter. A party delegate is therefore a representative whose mandate is bound, but bound to the party as opposed to the voters.

This model of representation connects well with the Responsible Party Model of representative democracy (described in the introduction). The RPM expects parties, rather than individual representatives, to adapt to voters’ opinions as expressed by elections, and expects voters to elect a party (and indirectly a party program) rather than an individual candidate. Therefore, representatives’ alignment with their party’s positions becomes an important mechanism for political representation. Only if representatives adapt their legislative action to the will of the party can voters influence policy-making in a desired way, according to the RPM.

The origin of this model of representation can be traced back to the creation and consolidation of the modern party systems in the late 19th century and early 20th century. As political parties became stronger and more important actors in representative systems of government, parties also required a stronger alignment among their representatives. As a strategy for ensuring the desired outcomes of legislative decision-making processes, parties acted to sanction disloyalty to party programs and common positions. Throughout the 20th century, empirical studies have identified a continuous shift in the roles of representation among representatives in party-centric systems of representative democracy from the trustee model towards a more widely diffused adoption of the party delegate model (cf. Gilljam et al., 2010b).

2.1.5 A conceptual framework of political representation
These considerations, in summation, leave us with a framework for three roles, styles, or models of representation: the trustee, the delegate, and the party delegate (see Figure 1 below). These models are distinguishable from
one another along two axes, (1) the extent to which the representative regards his or her mandate as bounded to a principle, and (2) whose preferences, or in Rehfeld’s term, judgment, the representative adheres to in his or her legislative action. The trustee regards the electoral mandate as unbound and makes decisions on the basis of his own judgment, while both the delegate and the party delegate regard their mandate as bound but to different principals. In the case of the party delegate, his or her party’s preferences are decisive for his actions while the delegate (or citizen delegate) adheres to the voters’ preferences. An analysis along these two dimensions allows us to interpret how representatives perceive that political representation—and even representative democracy as a whole—should function. The underlying question is: what institution or actor should be most decisive in the policy positions of representatives? Indirectly, as will be discussed below, the role taking may also tell us something of the representatives’ view on citizens’ participation in democracy and on communication between citizens and representatives.

This framework will lay out the theoretical basis for how political representation is conceptualized in this thesis. The roles of representation presented in this model are understood as representatives’ normative orientations regarding political representation, and supplying insights into how representatives legitimize their political power. Sanne (2001) argues that scholars must understand politicians’ identification with roles and descriptions of their role taking as normative orientations rather than objective self-descriptions. Representatives’ notions of their own roles are inseparable from the act of legitimizing the right to exercise political power and the will to improve society (Sanne 2001, p. 25). Affected by socialization processes within their political parties, institutions, and historical and cultural contexts, representatives formulate normative orientations in accordance with which their exercising of political power is then legitimized. It is possible to imagine that this process is dialogical. Politicians’ actions as representatives shape their normative constructs, and their normative orientations help steer their actions.

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3 In earlier frameworks on the roles of representatives, these axes were conceptualizations as describing (1) the style and (2) the focus (or foci) of political representation (cf. Eulau et. al, 1959). While focus is a concept most often used to denote different geographical foci of representation, there are examples of frameworks that differentiate between a party focus and a district (i.e. citizen-) focus (Damgaard, 1997; Penner et. al., 2006).
The primary focus of analysis in this thesis is, however, is not on explaining the determinants or consequences of these normative orientations, but instead on analysing what strategies representatives employ in order to fulfil these normative roles. What actions do they take, and what strategies do they utilize, to decrease the distance between their practical activities as representatives and the ideals they embrace regarding legitimate political representation? Before we turn to these issues, we will first focus on the relationship between representation, participation and political communication in attempting to understand how these roles of representation relate to different attitudes towards citizen participation and communication between representatives and citizens in a representative democracy.

2.2 Representation, participation and political communication

Just as representative systems of democracy are dependent on political participation by citizens, all normative ideals and models of representative democracy (those discussed above and others as well) are also dependent upon
certain form of transfer between citizens and political representatives. Only through such communicative transfers can views, promises, wishes, and mandates be communicated. While some models incorporate a restriction on the communication in the constituency-representative relationship (Giljam & Hermansson, 2003, pp. 15ff; Schumpeter, 1943, p. 295), others involve a vast array of communicative situations and functions (Åström, 2004; Barber, 1984; Coleman, 2005a; Coleman & Blumler, 2009; Lewin, 1970; Pitkin, 1967). Communication can therefore be described as a natural, but at the same time contested, feature of political representation.

It is important to emphasize that the contemporary debate is characterized only to a limited extent by extreme positions proposing a ban or strong limitation on citizen participation or communication between citizens and representatives; or a direct form of democracy in which citizen participation replaces political representation. Instead, a crude distinction can be made between ideals of a representative democracy that view communication among citizens and representatives in between elections as a necessary evil, and those that see such communication as essential for a representative democracy.

Joseph A. Schumpeter makes a clear example of the first category. In *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, he famously stated that: “[…] the role of the people [in a democracy] is to produce a government, or else an intermediate body which in turn will produce a national executive or government” (1943, p. 269). This was, in Schumpeter’s view, the only function of the citizens in a democracy (apart from potentially evicting that government or intermediate institutions through the selection of another). Citizen participation in between elections presented a problem, rather than a benefit, for democracies, not least because Schumpeter found citizens lacking the knowledge or the judgment necessary for advising governments (pp. 273 & 295). Like Burke, Schumpeter heralded the sovereignty of elected representatives, drawing as Burke did on an elitist view of democracy in which elected representatives should create a superior elite. Most important for Schumpeter was the existence of substantial competition for voters’ electoral support. Such competition, better than the attempts of citizens to influence policy maker in-between elections, would guarantee a qualitatively satisfying and at the same time democratically legitimate rule.

The pluralistic view of democracy developed in the 1950s and 1960s presents something of a middle ground, and agrees with Schumpeter’s basic premise that electoral competition creates the lifeblood of democratic legitimacy. Still, pluralists disagreed in part with Schumpeter’s elitist view of democracy. Scholars such as Dahl (1956), Polsby (1963) and Lindblom
(Dahl & Lindblom, 1953) saw a greater potential in interventions by interest groups and citizens in between elections. Such interventions could potentially help supply representatives and governments with knowledge about the attitudes of the citizenry, as well as important policy information that in turn could create grounds for better decisions (Wohlgemuth, 2006, p. 18-21). On the other hand, the pluralists were equipped with a pragmatic view of popular participation and did not regard the passivity of the majority of citizens as a problem for democracy. Popular participation and communication between citizens and representatives was important to the extent that it supported informed decision-making by elected representatives. Still, extensive participation or communication between citizens and representatives was not regarded as an important end in itself.

The opposite position seeing citizen participation and on-going communication as an essential feature of democracy, was promoted by participatory democrats gaining influence in this debate from the end of the 1960s and moving forward (Arnstein, 1969; Barber, 1984; Macpherson, 1977; Pateman, 1970; Pitkin & Shumer, 1982). According to a participatory model of democracy, the legitimacy of representative democracy is reliant on the extent to which citizens are given and utilized opportunities to voice their preferences towards political representatives and attempt to influence policy-making. Unlike the way it has often been portrayed, the participatory model of democracy seldom meant a shift from representative democracy to a participatory democracy through which political representation would be exchanged for direct forms of decision-making and popular participation. Newton illustrates this position well, writing:

> There is an understandable tendency in the literature on new forms of political involvement to assume that [...] direct democracy should render representative democracy obsolete. There is something wrong with this assumption that the new and the old are incompatible and alternative forms of government. New forms of direct democracy – whether referendums, co-governance, or citizen juries and mini-publics – are inevitably developed within and by the institutions of old forms of representative democracy. (2012, pp. 10-11)

The debate regarding citizen participation, as well as political communication in representative democracy, therefore positions itself on a scale between regarding citizen participation as necessary but problematic and a position seeing the same phenomena as a defining and important feature of a representative democracy. One central concept in this debate is political equality. Critics of intense and diverse political participation, as well as
on-going communication throughout the electoral cycle, underline the potential implications for the political equality of citizens. As the channels for communication and participation expand and gain more influence, the risk that some citizens are given a disproportional influence over policy-making while others remain inactive and without influence increases (Amanà, 2003; Esaiasson, 2010; Gilljam, 2003; Karlsson, 2011). This line of argument takes its stance from a view of the electoral arena as a strong basis for political equality. If the forms and opportunities for participation are limited only to elections (and the like, such as referendums), a form of representation that gives all participants the potential for equal influence over the selection of representatives, risks of inequality are kept at a minimum. Proponents of a more participatory form of representative democracy instead underline the importance of multiple forms of participation, potentially at the cost of political equality. This places more confidence in the potential of active citizens to act as representatives of the inactive (Saward, 2009; Wohlgemuth, 2006), and underlines the importance of diverse inputs into the governance process (Fung, 2006b).

2.3 Interactive communication and political representation

The concept of interactivity became a buzzword in the 1990s, and denotes various communicative features of new media in this emerging information society. The concept has been defined as the extent to which a medium allows users to influence the content or form of the mediated communication (Jensen, 1998, p. 201), but also as a particular form of communication in which new messages relate back to older messages (Rafaeli, 1988). Hence, the concept has been used both for describing communication processes, as well as the medium or arena for communication.

In this thesis, the concept is primarily used for describing the two arenas which empirical studies investigate, participatory initiatives and the political blogosphere. These arenas are interactive in the sense that they create venues aimed at fostering dialogue or have features that allow for a dialogue between political representatives and citizens, unlike other forms of political communication that are primarily unidirectional or monological (political manifestos or broadcasted speeches, etc.).

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4 The subject of this section is discussed at greater length in Article IV: ” Representation as interactive communication: Theoretical considerations and empirical findings.”
Attempts to study interactive communication empirically have predominantly employed technical and functional measurements, such as the number of interactive features on a specific website or blog (Yang & Lim, 2009). These empirical measurements provide little insight into the degree to which these interactive functions are used, as well as their purpose for-, and effects on communication processes (Sundar, et al., 2003).

This thesis focuses specifically on communication within the realm of political representation. In an attempt to create a definition of the concept that functions within this context, while at the same time incorporating the critique of existing measurements of interactive communication, interactivity in political representation is defined as the practice among political representatives for interacting in a responsive fashion with their voters, constituents, or citizens with regards to topics generally related to the relationship of representation (see also Article IV). Hence, this thesis focuses specifically on communication between citizens and representatives, actors that are connected through a representative relationship, and on communication that relates to that particular relationship.

2.3.1 Interactive communication as a norm or a strategic activity?

Prior attempts to theoretically understand and empirically study the relationship between interactive communication and political representation have led scholars to construct a number of new roles, or normative models, of representation that generally can be divided into two groups. The first group consists of roles that add to or break away from traditional conceptions of political representation, thus creating forms of interactive representation that substantially deviate from earlier forms and concepts (Coleman, 2005a; Norton, 2007; Zittel, 2003). These new forms of representation are centred on the communication between individual representatives and their constituents as the primary basis for legitimacy and policy direction. For representatives adhering to these models, political parties are of minor importance and influence over their political action. The second group of models creates a contrary position suggesting that interactive forms of communication are given little importance for representatives highly dependent on instructions and influence from political parties (Blaug, 2002; Coleman, 2005a; Zittel, 2003).

In accordance with these concepts, interactive forms of communication constitute practices that are

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5 For an overview of these theoretical models, see Article V, pp. 4-5.
essentially lip service with little influence over the actions and decision-making processes of political representatives.

Essentially, this duality concerning concepts and roles in earlier theoretical models suggest a dividing line between continuity and changes in political representation. As an extension this duality adopts the view of change as essentially revolutionary. Either the new replaces the old or is neglected, either everything changes or nothing at all. The first group of concepts suggest the possibility of substantial change in normative ideals. The latter group of concepts indicate continuity in terms of strong party dependence among representatives and gives interactive communication little influence over the norms and actions of representatives.

Several studies have shown the existence of something of a middle ground between continuity and change, rendering these prior frameworks ill-fitting for theorizing empirical results. Such empirical studies have shown that representatives adapt certain new behaviour and attitudes in connection to interactive communication while more resolute norms of political representation and decision-making are left unchanged (cf. Article II, IV & V; Stromer-Galley, 2000; Ward et al., 2007). It is therefore possible to argue that variations in representatives’ attitudes and practices are not satisfactorily captured by the construction of new roles of representation that work as conceptualisations of whole new norms of representation. While it is unlikely that new forms of communication would inspire changes in normative conceptions (such as roles of representation) that are deeply rooted within political institutions, it is possible that changes could be initiated that relate to the strategies adopted within such institutions in order to attain the stated norms (Agre, 2002; Wright, 2012). In other words, we should not expect politicians to suddenly formulate new norms of representation, but instead note the possibility for the introduction of new strategies to follow and fulfil old norms.

With this argumentation and the identified discrepancies between prior frameworks and empirical investigation in mind, we will now proceed to formulate a conceptual framework for studying interactive communication in relation to political representation. This framework does not regard interactive communication as grounds for constructing new roles of political representation. Instead, interactive communication is understood as a strategic action initiated by political representatives in order to potentially
aid or fulfil different roles of representation. Such action does, if successful, reduce the distance between representative’s practical conduct and normative ideals for political representation. In order to qualify as strategic practices (or actions), occurrences of interactive communication must have a clear function in relation to different roles of representation. If this is not the case, representatives lack incentives, related to political representation, for communicating with citizens. This framework presents three potential functions of communication between representatives and citizens as derived and adapted from earlier normative theoretical works. These functions are termed accountability, inquiry, and connectivity.

Accountability
Accountability is a central process in a representative democracy. The concept traditionally denotes one of two (main) ways through which voters can steer their political representatives (Miller & Stokes, 1963). The concept is understood to describe the process in which a representative is held accountable to his or her constituents in elections. If a representative has failed to live up to the constituents’ expectations, he or she is sanctioned by not being re-elected and is thus held accountable for these failures. Following the writings of Pitkin (1967), political theorists have increasingly focused on a second “positive” and “pro-active” meaning of the concept. In accordance with this definition, the concept is used to describe accounts made by a representative of his or her own convictions, for instance, or the rationale behind prior actions (Coleman, 2005a; Mansbridge, 2009). This form of accountability is particularly important in situations in which a representative deviates from an electoral promise (or announced policy position) or the expressed wishes of his or her constituents. In this sort of situation, communication has a clear function in mediating “explanations” and “good reasons” for representative’s policy positions, as well as accounts from critical constituents. This gives representatives a way to legitimize their political actions by giving accounts to and hearing accounts from their constituents (Lipinski & Cooper, 2003). Hence, prac-

6 The term strategic, when used in relation to political representatives, often implies activities chosen for the goal of re-election (see for example Zittel, 2009a, p 8). In this study, the term is given broader meaning in denoting also actions aimed at legitimizing a representative’s political mandate. For further discussion of this concept see Article IV.

7 In the different articles of this thesis, varying terminology is used for these functions.
tices of communication with citizens may function as an instrument for the representative to align his or her policy position with the views of the represented, or, in cases in which such an alignment is not possible, to give accounts to the represented for explaining the failure to comply with the expressed desire of the voters (Pitkin, 1967, pp. 209-210).

Inquiry
Communication may also play the function of allowing for representatives to inquire among their constituents in order to uncover new perspectives and ideas from, and learn about the policy positions of their constituents. Through interaction between representatives and constituents, such ideas can be aggregated and discussed. Not only can the preferences and wishes of the citizens be voiced through such inquiries, but their knowledge about specific policy issues or situations in society can also be determined (Fung, 2006b). Direct communication between representatives and constituents for this form of inquiry may be of greater importance in contemporary societies, as scholars underline the increasing complexity of governance processes and the widening distance between citizens and political parties. While political parties may have been successful in channelling the wishes and beliefs of the citizenry in the past, the contemporary situation, characterized by low levels of party identification among the public and weakening party membership organizations, indicate the potential need for increased communication between individual representatives and their constituents (Karlsson & Lundberg, 2011).

While interactive forms of communication remain ineffective channels for representatives to inquire with large numbers of constituencies, it does create opportunities for responsive communication with a few citizens. Such instruments can be used to address specific groups that may otherwise be unheard in the political process.

Connectivity
Although communication between representatives and constituents primarily serves the purpose of transferring information directly for the decision-making of representatives, an important function of communication relates to fostering mutual trust between the parties. Coleman and Blumler argue that representatives, through their act of communication, generate a greater feeling of being represented among, and a stronger connection with, their constituents (Coleman & Blumler, 2009, pp. 69f). The theoretical basis for this line of argumentation is found within the theory of social
capital (Putnam, 2000). Social capital relates to the idea that popular participation and collaboration helps individuals to see closer connections between their individual interests and the public good (Portes, 1998, p. 2). This process may help foster what is, in this thesis, termed connectivity between constituents and their representatives as they become more closely connected through communication. The concept of connectivity relates to trust, as well as what Coleman and Blumler (2009) describes as citizens’ feelings of being represented. This form of connectivity between representatives and constituents may reduce constituents’ need to survey the actions of their representatives, as well as to lessen feelings of disconnection with and distance from their representatives, which could form grounds for electoral sanctions.

**2.3.2 Connecting interactive communication to roles of representation**

The argument has been made earlier that communication between citizens and representatives is best understood as a strategic practice, functional in relation to different roles of representation. The three functions of communication between representatives and citizens described above are characterized by their potential to generate important benefits for political representatives. In accordance with the arguments presented here, representatives may, through communication with their constituents, supply explanations for their policy positions, gather information about their constituents’ attitudes and knowledge on specific policy issues, as well as foster a closer connection with their constituents. The question still remains for how these functions relate to the different norms or roles of political representation that have been identified earlier.

These roles are distinguished on the basis that they represent dissimilar norms for how political representation can be legitimized, and also ultimately, three different directions of logic for how political representatives should act. In this section, we will investigate the connections between each function and each of the three roles of representation. The argument will be made communication between representatives and citizens has merits within each of the roles of representation, acknowledging that political representatives of different normative convictions can utilize this form of communication in line with their pursuit to legitimize their role as a representative. The relationship between the three roles of representation and the functions of communication are summarized in table 1 below.

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8 Coleman & Blumler use the term "connectedness" in their publications.
Table 1. Strategic functions of communication in different roles of representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of representation</th>
<th>Accountability</th>
<th>Inquiry</th>
<th>Connectivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trustee:</strong> Acting in accordance with one’s own conviction, independent of opposing positions from voters and political party</td>
<td>Make accounts of the correspondence of prior decisions and announcements of one’s own conviction, as well as accounts of independence from other interests</td>
<td>Acquire ideas and information from the electorate (possibly altering one’s own view)</td>
<td>Strengthen the connection with the constituents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delegate:</strong> Mandate bound to the expressed will of the represented</td>
<td>Make accounts of the correspondence between prior decisions and the will of the represented</td>
<td>Acquire information on the current will of the electorate</td>
<td>Strengthen the connection with the constituents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party delegate:</strong> Mandate bound to the pronounced strategy of the political party</td>
<td>Make accounts of the correspondence of prior decisions to the party line</td>
<td>Acquire accounts in order to contribute to forming the future party strategy</td>
<td>Strengthen the connection with party voters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Article IV, p. 1211.*

Representatives that hold the trustee role as a norm for political representation value independence highly. These representatives are not interested in communicating in order to acquire instructions on how to act from their voters or parties. Instead, they act only in accordance with their own conviction. Despite this, communication with citizens may play an important function for this type of representative. The trustee role does not exclude the possibility of a representative altering his or her view on an issue, only that the representative adopts a position that he or she does not agree with. If the electorate or the party presents a solution to a specific problem that the trustee finds better than his or her previous position, this may well form grounds for a position change that is in line with the trustee role. The trustee must also be able to provide accounts for the reasoning behind his political decisions. Although the trustee acts in sovereignty and thus does not change positions in order to avoid electoral sanction, this representative is interested in creating an understanding among voters as to why his solution...
was in their interest in order to win renewed electoral support. A trustee representative is also reliant on his or her constituents’ trust. The vertical trust between constituents and representative creates the foundation for a form of representation that allows the trustee to act in a fashion that does not always correspond with the expressed will of the represented. Therefore, the trustee may engage in communication with his or her constituents in an attempt to foster trust and a strong connection to them.

Representatives adhering to a delegate role are strongly reliant on information about the view of the constituents. This information is of key importance for a representative that strives to act in accordance with the will of the represented. Therefore, a delegate may strive to inquire with the constituents to form future policy, but also give accounts on correspondences between his or her policy positions and the will of the constituents. This form of relationship between representative and constituent is based on communication, and is therefore also reliant upon openness and a strong connection between representative and the represented. Fostering a trusting relationship may be in the interest of both parties, as it might lessen the need for surveillance of the representative among constituents.

The party delegate is, just like the (citizen) delegate, acting as an agent bound to strategies and decisions formulated by a principal. Unlike the delegate, the principal is the political party. These representatives must give accounts about correspondences between their actions as a representative and the party position to party voters. Inquiring with party voters may not shape the position of the representative’s own actions, but might very well be useful for shaping future party policies. The party delegate also relies on a trusting relationship with the whole spectra of party voters, rather than with his or her constituents alone. A relationship of trust can be facilitated through communication with members of this group, thus fostering connectivity between the representative and the party electorate.

As evidenced by this argumentation, communication between representatives and citizens can be understood as a strategic action with divergent functions for political representatives of different normative orientations. In this sense, the theoretical framework proposed is flexible in relation to political representation. The three functions of communication discussed are possible to align with all three different roles of representation.
3 Two arenas for representation and political communication

This chapter supplies an overview of the research fields relating to the two arenas in which the relationship between representation and political communication is investigated in this thesis, participatory initiatives and political blogging. These arenas are dissimilar in several and important ways, thus supplying the analyses with divergent contexts for the research questions and theoretical assumptions to be empirically tested in. While participatory initiatives are institutionalized to varying degrees, the political blogosphere is located outside of the institutional realm of representative democracy. Furthermore, participatory initiatives are primarily located in a governance context while earlier studies have underlined the political function of the blogosphere to be foremost related to electoral campaigns. The blogosphere also offers opportunities for communication between individual citizens and individual representatives while participatory initiatives instead create meetings between collectives of citizens and groups of representatives. In terms of the commonalities between these arenas, they are both relatively new and both offer channels for communication between citizens and representatives that are located outside of the traditional practices of representative democracy.

3.1 Participatory initiatives

Participatory initiatives is one among many concepts used to describe the renewal and transformation of processes of representative democracy that entails the creation of procedures for citizen participation outside of established institutions such as elections and political parties. These initiatives are generally perceived as ways to aid and reinvigorate the representative democracy, although not as alternatives to it (Bengtsson, 2008, p. 161-162; Netwon, 2012, p. 10-11). This overview aims to summarize the essential commonalities between these initiatives while also illustrating the vast heterogeneity both among the divergent forms of initiatives that are pursued in different democratic contexts as well as the heterogeneity within the research field. The theoretical developments within this field, as well as the political implications of these initiatives for the future of representative democracy, are further explored in later chapters.

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9 Democratic innovations (Smith 2005 & 2009; Bengtsson, 2008), participatory engineering (Zittel & Fuchs, 2007) and citizen dialogues or in Swedish “medborgardialoger” (Gilljam et al., 2010a; Karlsson, 2011; SALAR, 2009) are other examples.
as the most prominent questions posted in this research, will be addressed. Ultimately the connections between participatory initiatives and political representation will be discussed.

3.1.1 From participatory democracy to participatory initiatives

In the 1960s and 70s, participatory democracy exploded onto the democratic theoretical arena and as a new democratic ideal that incorporated the radicalism of the time into a participatory conception of democracy. Theorists such as Arnstein (1969), Pateman (1970), Macpherson (1977), Pitkin & Shumer (1982) and Barber (1984) criticized “realistic” and “liberal” democratic ideals for giving citizens a too-narrowly defined role and argued for a citizen-centric democratic ideal that highly valued active political participation. The philosophical roots for these ideals were a combination of ancient Greek democracy and the writings of Rousseau as well as John Stewart Mill (Bengtsson, 2008, pp. 57-59) but also Marxist theory (Held, 1997, p. 326; Rosanvallon, 2011, p. 204). At the heart of the development of participatory democracy in the 1960s was workplace democracy, but the scope of the theory expanded beyond the workplace into an attempt to formulate a comprehensive democratic ideal. The central component of participatory democracy is the participation of citizens, thought not only to reinvigorate democracy but also to build the competences and political efficacy of the participating citizens themselves. While proposing a radical shift towards more participatory institutions, participatory democrats do generally not dismiss the necessity of elections and political representation.

Although contemporary practices of participatory initiatives rely to varying extents on the heritage from participatory democracy, extensive developments set contemporary practices apart from the participatory theorists of the 1960s and 70s. Most essentially, little of the radicality of participatory democracy is evident, neither in the participatory initiatives initiated by governments nor among the proponents of such initiatives in the scholarly community. Instead, an important characteristic among these initiatives is that they are in fact most often initiated top-down, emerging from governments and local governments rather than from the citizenry and civil society (Netwon, 2012, p. 11; Rosanvallon, 2011, p. 204). Furthermore, these participatory initiatives are also less radical in the sense of being restricted to specific issues or areas of governance (Rosanvallon, 2011, p. 204). Participatory initiatives can be understood as a governance tool implemented by governments for the purposes of attempting to solve or aid in the solving of complex policy issues (Fung, 2006b; Kljin & Kop-
penjan, 2000;). As such, participatory initiatives clearly coexist within and together with old institutions and processes of representative democracy (Newton, 2012, p. 11) rather than posing to be a replacement of them.

The shift from participatory democracy to participatory initiatives can be understood in relation to two related developments: (1) The deliberative turn in democratic theory and (2) the participatory turn in democratic governance. Evolving from Habermasian thought, the deliberative democratic ideal has dominated the theoretical debate since the 1990s (Dryzek, 2007; Mutz, 2008). Deliberative democracy focuses on the communicative aspects of political participation, highlighting the potential for learning and cooperation between participants under specific procedural circumstances (see Dryzek, 2000, pp. 1-7 for an overview), and detracting focus from conflicts in society (Jezierska, 2011, pp. 95-101; Mansbridge, 2006; Mouffe, 1999).

On a more general note, the deliberative turn involves a change from aggregative to communicative forms of political participation. Rather than supporting the expansion of public participation in exercises of making decisions or voicing preferences through voting, deliberative democrats underline the importance for deliberative procedures of participation that not only decides among predetermined alternatives but asks what the underlying problem is and what potential solutions might be (Habermas, 1993). Although presenting a somewhat radical ideal in relation to the forms and procedures through which political participation should be conducted, deliberative democrats are, in relation to their participatory predecessors, less radical in terms of their view of liberal democracy (Dryzek, 2000, p. 2-3).

Aided by this renewed, and to some degree de-radicalized, conception of citizen participation a growing number of governments and international organizations (for example the World bank, United nations and the European union) have since the 90s turned positively towards including new forms of citizen participation in representative democracy. The explanation for this new positive inclination towards citizen participation lies in part in the evidence of crisis of legitimacy for representative democracy (discussed in the introduction, see also Rosanvallon, 2011). But also in the de-radicalization of political participation.

The so-called “argumentative turn” in public policy making (Fischer & Forester, 1993; Fischer & Gottweis, 2012) entailed a shift in how policy making procedures were carried out. Researchers had observed a shift in public policy making towards introducing more communicative processes. New concepts such as interactive policy making (cf. Edelenbos et al., 2009), interactive governance (Denters et al., 2003) and citizen govern-
ance (John, 2009) emerged in the policy literature, describing a development from an expert-oriented and technocratic ideal towards more inclusive and communicative policy making processes where citizen participation through deliberation played a greater role (Fischer & Gottweis, 2012, pp. 1-3). Sceptics of this de-radicalization of participatory politics often underline the status quo of power dynamics between citizens and political elites (Pateman, 2012) as well as the understating of social and political conflicts as risks of new forms of citizen participation (Dahlstedt, 2009; Mansbridge, 2006; Mouffe, 1999).

3.1.2 Different forms of participatory initiatives
Several empirical studies have underlined the strong influence of the design of participatory initiatives and participatory processes on outcomes (Article I; Åström & Grönlund, 2012; Fung, 2006a; Wright & Street, 2007). Scholars have presented several analytical frameworks distinguishing between different designs or forms of participatory initiatives along several dimensions. A salient dimension in these frameworks classifies initiatives on the basis of the level of competences or power they award citizens in the policy-making process. This dimension was first introduced by Arnstein’s (1969) “Ladder of participation” that described different forms of community participation. The ladder reached from its lowest branches of “non-participation” up to “citizen control”, forms of participation that awarded citizens full control of their neighbourhoods. Inspired by Arnstein, several frameworks distinguish (1) merely consultative or informative initiatives through which citizens are consulted and receive information, from (2) co-governance initiatives that awards participants together with political representatives and public officials shared competences to make decisions, and (3) direct democratic initiatives that awards participants full competences to make decisions among themselves (cf. Esaiasson, 2010; Fung, 2006a; Geissel & Newton, 2012; Smith, 2009). In the Swedish context participatory initiatives generally belong to categories 1 and 2, as citizens are not given direct influence, such as, for instance, through binding referendums.10 Common forms of participatory initiatives in Sweden are citizen councils (e.g. for senior citizens, youths, handicapped etc.), user boards and open board meetings (Gilljam & Jodal, 2006).

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10 At times local councils have although in advance pledged to follow the outcomes of local consultative referendums in their decision-making.
Another dimension by which earlier studies have categorized forms of participatory initiatives relates to the modes of communication that they entail (Fung, 2006a; Geissel & Newton, 2012), or in other words how participants interact with each other and with representatives. This dimension to some extent overlaps with the power dimension presented above. In consultative and informative initiatives, citizens are merely acting as spectators or express their preferences, while the communicative repertoire expands in more power-intense initiatives. As such, participants can set out to develop their preferences through interaction with other participants, policy-makers and public officials or bargain with them around policy proposals. In some cases, participants are also expected to deliberate around policy problems to reach new solutions (Fung, 2006a, pp. 68-69).

A third dimension relates to the question of who participates. Are all interested citizens allowed to participate or are participants selected by the government? And if so on what grounds? The question of participant selection has proven to be immensely important for the democratic legitimacy of participatory initiatives (see Karlsson, 2012a for an overview). Decisions about who are allowed to participate in such initiatives are related to central issues for democratic legitimacy such as equality (Parkinson, 2003) representativeness (Fishkin & Luskin, 2005) and accountability (Brown, 2006; Teorell, 2008). While representative democracy creates a foundation for political equality through universal suffrage, additional processes of political participation outside of elections that allows only for some citizens to participate risk decreasing political equality (see chapter 2.2 for an extended discussion). Therefore open-self selection, a recruitment strategy that allows for all willing citizens to participate, has been shown to be the predominant recruitment strategy in contemporary participatory initiatives (Åström & Grönlund, 2012).

Still, open-self selection has evident disadvantages. While formally creating opportunities for equal participation, participatory initiatives employing this recruitment strategy has been shown to produce heavily biased collectives of participants. Some cases shows clear evidence of domination of participants from more or less organized interests (Karlsson, 2010, 2012a & 2012b; Persson, 2007). In order to decrease these biases, some participatory initiatives utilize different forms of strategic recruitment, either by selecting participants on the basis of their characteristics or by random selection. Such strategies are both more costly as well as work intense and require that the principle of universal participation be neglected. Despite this, such strategic recruitment has clear advantages, as the risks of biases and domination are manageable. By contrast, such strate-
gies face the difficulty of deciding which participants should be included in the process and on what terms (Fung, 2010).

The discussion above presents three dimensions along which participatory initiatives can and have been classified. While the power dimension has been most salient in earlier frameworks, both modes of communication and recruitment strategies have been proven to make important decisions for the functioning of participatory initiatives (Article I; Åström & Grönlund, 2012).

3.1.3 Participatory initiatives and political representation
The relationship between political participation and representative democracy has been already been discussed in section 2.2. This section contributes to that discussion by focusing specifically on the relationship between participatory initiatives and political representation. The position of several earlier studies is that the potential of participatory initiatives to support representative democracy is dependent on such initiatives’ compatibility with established institutions (see Article II, p. 799 for an overview). As has been shown above, participatory initiatives are located within, rather than outside of, established systems of representative democracy. Such initiatives can be understood as purposeful attempts to aid and reinvigorate such systems (Zittel, 2007) rather than provide radical alternatives to them. Only if political representatives find such initiatives beneficial for facilitating their role as representatives can we expect citizens’ participatory efforts to have an impact on public policy making. It is therefore crucial for researchers to understand representatives’ attitudes towards such initiatives as well as the dynamics that foster those attitudes.

While scholars and democratic theorists have paid much attention to discussing the potential conflicts and complementarities between citizen participation and political representation (see section 2.2), little empirical work has been devoted to studying the attitudes and practices of political representatives in such processes (see Copus, 2003; Denters & Klok, 2012; Sweeting & Copus, 2013 for exceptions). This makes one of the most important tasks of the studies in this thesis focused on participatory initiatives.

3.2 Political blogging
Blogs are a technology that materialized in the mid 1990s but only began to gain wider recognition and diffusion in the early 2000s. A blog (or weblog) can at its most basic be characterized as a website in which updates are posted and catalogued in a reverse-chronology. In most cases blogs allow for some degree of interactive communication between readers and the author of the
blog, often through comment fields. At the centre of their political potential lies the fact that blogs constitute a medium for political communication that offers a low threshold for participation, low communication costs, and strong possibilities for mass communication in large networks (Koop & Janssen, 2009). The technology required to set up a blog is made freely available to anyone with a computer and an Internet access by blog platforms such as “Wordpress” and “Google Blogger.” Blogs are also freely accessible for readers, creating the potential to reach a large audience.

Like many other forms of social media, blogs were first received with scepticism and doubt. This is also true within the political sphere. In one early publication on political blogging, “Political Blogs: Craze or Convention?” (Ferguson & Howell, 2004) the results of a study of the reaction to some of the novel political blogs in the UK from a jury of people with varying political experience were presented. While the jury found the simplicity and low costs of the technology promising, the jury was not impressed by the content of these early political blogs, which they found unengaging and generally disappointing (Ferguson & Griffiths, 2006, p. 366). This unrealized potential of political blogs is underlined also other scholars (Coleman, 2005b; Wright, 2008; Carlson et al., 2013).

As a political practice, blogging has undergone a transformation during its short history, from being a practice of a few self-publishing individuals often presenting alternative views on politics to a wide-ranging phenomenon that encompasses traditional elites within mainstream media, commerce and established political parties (Karpf, 2008). Large, influential blog networks (such as “The Daily Kos”) have emerged in many countries characterized by diverging degrees of organization (Benkler & Shaw, 2010). Also, established parties and political elites have increasingly taken up blogging as a regular part of political communication (Coleman & Moss, 2008). Through this transformation, the blogosphere has gained significant influence on the political agenda, and as a result has become a more common research topic for political scientists (Karpf, 2008).

3.2.1 Blogging among political representatives

For political representatives the political blogosphere offers an arena for direct and individualized communication with citizens that cut out middleman such as traditional media and political parties. In a time when citizens’ identification with and support for political parties is decreasing, and representative democracy is afflicted with a sense of distance between citizens and representatives such an arena may be highly valuable. Politi-
icians’ entry into blogging has although not been without conflict. In his study of local councillors blogging in the UK, Wright (2008) describes evidence of tension between parties and blogging politicians. This study found evidence both of parties attempting to limit and steer politicians’ blogging, as well as of blogging politicians’ own tendencies of self-censorship (p. 93). Coleman (2005b, pp. 276-277, cited in the introduction) offers a possible explanation for this tension as rooted in the culture of party loyalty. As long as political representatives are rooted in a collectivistic party culture that expects not only their loyalty but also their willingness to broadcast party messages through their individual blogs, Coleman sees little possibility for engaged interaction between citizens and representatives in the political blogosphere.

Hence, blogging politicians are faced with a dilemma, as the “ethos” of the medium they are using is potentially in conflict with the nature of the organizations they belong to and represent. This dilemma resembles, to a great extent, the central dilemma of political representation: should representatives act in accordance with their own conviction or follow instructions from others (their voters or their party)? Explorations into how blogging politicians handle this tension between the blog medium and the party logic is of key importance for our understanding of the nature of political blogging.

In addressing this challenge, two important dimensions of political blogging can be distinguished. The first is a dimension relating to the focus of the content of political blogs. A distinction can be made between blogs that are focused on person and blogs that are focused on party. Do politicians use their blogs as a platform for communicating the positions of their party or instead to promote their own personal positions and opinions? The second dimension of the concept focuses on the purpose of communicating through blogging. To what extent do blogging politicians engage in this communicative practice in order to support and manage their roles as political representatives? In investigations of how politicians use their blogs in relation to these dimensions we can explore the tension between established institutions and the nature of the blog medium hinted in earlier research. Do politicians that utilize blogging for political representation also break away from a party-centric culture and focus their blogging efforts on person rather than party? Earlier studies suggest that this ought to be the case (Coleman, 2005a & 2005b; Zittel, 2003). Or is the usage of blogs for political representation compatible with a party focus? These questions are explored in the studies in this thesis related to the political blogosphere (Article III, IV & V).
4 Explanatory perspectives

One of the research questions guiding this thesis concerns identifying factors that explain variations in how representatives communicate with citizens. Each article in the thesis seeks to identify such factors, guided by earlier hypotheses from diverse fields of research (see chapter 3), as well as attempts to investigate factors that earlier research has overlooked. For this thesis’s relatively novel area of research within political science, the process of identifying relevant explanatory factors and indicators can be characterised as an explorative endeavour. Furthermore, the broad focus of the thesis, including participatory initiatives as well as political blogging, has demanded flexibility in order to accommodate various contexts. The explanatory factors investigated can nonetheless be categorised into three explanatory perspectives, each prominent in earlier studies of political representation: strategic considerations, practical circumstances, and normative orientations (cf. Gilljam et al., 2010b; Wahlke et al., 1962). This chapter presents the three explanatory perspectives along with the empirical indicators of each perspective in its respective empirical studies.

4.1 Strategic considerations

The main lesson from rational-choice institutionalism is that the context in which political actors operate in turn shapes the incentive structures related to different actions. Research on political representation has provided us with examples of the influence of institutional contexts on political behaviour, such as how electoral systems and the positions of representatives within legislatures shape the incentives for different roles of political representation (Strøm, 1997; Zittel, 2009a). Earlier studies have shown that the characteristics of the electoral districts in which representatives operate influence the style and focus of political representatives (Eulau et al., 1959; Wahlke et al., 1962). According to this strategic perspective, each representative considers the context he or she faces when deciding how to communicate with citizens (Lipinski & Cooper, 2003).

To address strategic considerations through empirical studies among representatives in a single country context, this thesis focuses on contextual factors that vary within a single country: in this case Sweden. First, we might expect that representatives’ incentives for communicating with citizens differ according to the political level in which they operate, since this factor influences the distance between the representative and constituents. John Stuart Mill (1861) argued that local representatives are
more influenced by their voters than national representatives are, a hypothesis that has been empirically confirmed in the Swedish political context (Gilljam et al., 2010b, p. 44). Local politicians find themselves in more regular contact with voters and thus ought to be more influenced by local opinions, partly because unpopular decisions may provoke a dissent that directly impact the representatives’ daily lives. This hypothesis is examined in more detail in Article V by investigating the differences between locally and nationally oriented blogging representatives on modes of communication.

Recent studies have indicated that parliamentary position, or whether the representative belongs to the majority or the opposition, influences representatives’ normative role orientation (Gilljam et al., 2010b, p. 55). Majority representatives tend to be more party oriented and party loyal than members of the opposition. One probable explanation for this trend is that political majorities rely heavily on the loyalty of their members to ensure majoritarian support for their policy programs in parliament. Still, how to shift this hypothesis from the context of normative role orientation to that of modes of communication with citizens is far from obvious. An argument presented by David A. Karpf (2009) might, however, facilitate the shift. Karpf argues that opposition parties, having lost an election, are more likely to seek to innovate their activities and are thus likely more willing to engage in communication with citizens. For these parties, resistance toward new strategies within the party organisation might be less rigid than in majoritarian parties, whose communication strategies have been validated by their recent electoral success. The hypothesis that opposition candidates engage more actively in communication with citizens is examined in Articles II and V. Furthermore, Article III investigates differences in campaign communication between incumbent politicians and challenger candidates.

Participatory initiatives create specific semi-institutional contexts, which may shape the actions of citizens and representatives that engage in such initiatives. Studies have underscored how the design of participatory processes heavily influences outcomes (Fung, 2006a; Fung, 2010; Karlsson, 2012a, Newton, 2012; Wright & Street, 2007). The specific influence of the design of participatory initiatives on their usefulness for communication between citizens and representatives is the focus of Article I, which presents a case study of the European Citizens’ Consultations.
4.2 Practical circumstances

The environments in which political actors operate are shaped not only by the institutional contexts but also by practical circumstances that vary even within similar contexts. For instance, representatives’ previous experiences with certain situations or problems may influence future actions. In studies of phenomena, such as political blogging and participatory initiatives, such experiences may be of great importance. Although the representatives’ position within the institutional context presents strong incentives for innovative actions, their inexperience with the required technologies or processes may frustrate such actions.

In studies of the relationship between ICTs and politics, researchers have often focused on technological explanations. From a technological perspective, political actors response to- and adaptations of ICTs are relatively independent of ideology, strategy, and other social influences. The most important factor driving digital politics is thus thought to be technological development itself. The technologies available directly influence the possibilities for communication between representatives and citizens, but also indirectly influence the incentives for such communication (Norris, 2001). As new communication technologies create opportunities for reaching wider audiences while making communication cheaper, the potential benefits as well as costs of communication are changed. A growing number of empirical results suggest that Internet use in itself encourages online political activity among citizens. Specifically, Internet use has been found to influence the likelihood of one’s political participation online independent of political interest and social characteristics (di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006; Gibson, Lusoli, & Ward, 2005; Xenos & Moy, 2007). Polat (2005) argues that the Internet can influence participation in at least three different ways: namely, by way of providing citizens with a source of political information, being an efficient and effective channel for communication, and cultivating a virtual public sphere. Still, the mobilisation hypothesis related to ICTs is highly controversial and has been the focus of numerous studies that have presented mixed outcomes (see Boulianne, 2009 for an overview).

In studies of political representation, evidence suggests a relationship between Internet use and increased interaction between representatives and citizens. Surveys among Swedish political representatives, for instance, show that experienced Internet users have greater confidence in technology’s potential to promote democratic values and that these users are more enthusiastic about the strategic use of new technology (Åström, 2004 & 2005). Repre-
sentatives’ earlier experiences with technology therefore seem important to the goals and operations they associate with the same technology later on.

The influence of experiences on communication between representatives and citizens is investigated in Articles II, III, IV, and V. Article II investigates divergent experiences with participatory initiatives in relation to representatives’ attitudes, behaviours, and role orientations. Though earlier studies have indicated that strategic factors and normative orientations influence how representatives engage with participatory initiatives (Copus, 2003; Copus, 2010; Gilljam et al., 2010b, Sweeting & Copus, 2013), research examining the influence of prior experiences with participatory initiatives is scant.

Articles III, IV, and V investigate the influence of activity and experience with political blogging on how representatives use blogging for election campaigning and communication with citizens. Article V particularly investigates representatives’ confidence in the political importance of social media. Meanwhile, Article III includes analyses of how the network centrality of politicians’ blogs influences their blogging use for election campaigns. Briefly, network centrality refers to the position of a particular blog within the wider blogosphere by way of measuring the number of links to that blog. Blogs central to the network are frequently linked by other sources, while peripheral blogs are seldom linked.

4.3 Normative perspectives

Does ideological orientation guide a representative’s communication with his or her constituents? While early American studies of role orientations among representatives dismiss the influence of ideology (Eulau et al., 1959), several Swedish studies have emphasised how party affiliation to a great degree explains differences in role orientation among political representatives (Gilljam et al., 2010b; Holmberg, 1974; Wallin et al., 1981). Underlying inter-party differences are divergent ideological orientations among representatives from different parties. Holmberg (1974), for instance, highlights the tradition of collectivism within socialism as an important explanation for the prevalence of the party delegate role. For leftist parties, the guiding principle has been party solidarity, while centre-right parties are typically influenced by the liberal, individual tradition of representation. Others argue that a party’s historical origin is also important. To a greater degree than for right-wing parties, the historical ties with the labour movement and strong emphasis on membership organisations have urged leftist parties to allow extra-parliamentary party organisation to influence representatives (Wallin et al., 1981).
In the field of online political communication little attention has been paid to ideological factors. Instead, the predominant focus has been the influences of institutional settings and technological factors. In recent studies, by contrast, scholars have identified important differences in the ways that different parties engage with political blogging (Benkler & Shaw, 2012; Karpf, 2009). The studies of this thesis investigate the influence of ideology on how representatives communicate with citizens through the blog medium. In Articles III and V, differences among blogging politicians from different parties and party blocs are investigated. Both articles include analyses of the relationship between the respondents’ ideological orientation and their use of blogs. By including measures of party affiliation as well as individual ideological orientation, these studies are able to investigate the potential influence of party organisations as well as of ideological orientation.

Other studies have identified party affiliation as an important factor for understanding representatives’ attitudes toward participatory initiatives (Copus, 2003; Copus, 2010; Gilljam et al., 2010b, Sweeting & Copus, 2013). In Article II, this relationship is analysed through comparisons of local councillors from different party blocs. Further, Article II, IV and V present analyses of how normative orientations towards political representation influences representatives’ engagement in communication with citizens.

4.4 Control variables

The influence of the three above perspectives is investigated in relation to a number of control factors chosen in relation to the focus of each article. Studies have found that gender plays a significant role in relation to representatives’ as well as citizens’ attitudes toward political communication and citizen participation in politics (Hooghe & Marien, 2012; Hooghe & Stolle, 2011; Naurin & Öhberg, 2013). The factor of gender is thus included as a control variable in several studies as well as in studies of both arenas. Age and level of education come into play foremost in relation to political blogging, as studies of Internet use shows substantial differences among age groups and along different levels of education (Findahl, 2010). Further, studies of online campaigning have shown that younger candidates are more likely to use personal websites, blogs and online chats in their campaigns (Zittel, 2009b). In Article III, which addresses blogging in the context of political campaigns, additional controls for geographical location are included. Earlier research has identified differences in campaign strategies among political candidates in relation to level of education. Furthermore, an observed bias in blog usage among candidates in
relation to geography (the Stockholm metropolitan area was strongly overrepresented in the data), necessitated a statistical control for geographical location. Scholars have also argued that the demand for online campaigning and social media use in political campaigns ought to be higher in highly urbanized constituencies (Carlsson et al., 2013, p. 7). Since no significant relationships were found between geographical location or education level on communication between representatives and citizens, these controls were excluded from subsequent analyses.

4.5 Explanatory perspectives and change

The three explanatory perspectives have divergent implications in relation to the potential for change over time. While normative orientations, such as ideological position and party affiliation tend to be stable over time, strategic positions and practical circumstances are more prone to vary. Results indicating that representatives’ communication with citizens is conditioned by strategic positions and practical circumstances therefore indicate leeway for change over time. Members of the opposition can, for instance, possibly win a majority of the seats in parliament after the next election. Similarly, representatives with little experience of political blogging might gain experience over time.

If, by contrast, variations in such communication are found to be strongly dependent on representatives’ normative orientations, then the potential for change narrows. Such results would indicate that representatives’ communication with citizens is mediated by organisational cultures within political parties and ideological frameworks that are less susceptible to change. Although organisations do change over time, they are found to resist changes that conflict with shared norms and values (Ahrne & Papakostas, 1994; Brundin, 2008).

Table 2 (below) shows the indicators used to operationalise each explanatory perspective for each article. Variations in indicators among the articles partly reflect strategic choices related to each article’s particular aim and focus. Such variations also partly derive from the cumulative development of theoretical frameworks and operationalisations during the research process.
Table 2. Explanatory perspectives and empirical indicators

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5 Research design and analytical strategy

This thesis locates itself within a tradition of quantitative political research based on survey data and statistical analysis. Within this rich and heterogeneous tradition (see Kirkpatrick, 1974 for an overview), the studies included in this thesis employ multiple analytical techniques with two important shared characteristics; (1) they primarily analyse individual level data, and (2) although some time series analyses are conducted, the techniques and the data are primarily cross-sectional. Hence, the studies are mainly interested in understanding the variation of attributes among individuals at a given time. This chapter outlines the research design as well as analytical strategy of this thesis and discusses its benefits and drawbacks. Thereafter, it presents the three empirical materials analysed in the articles and follows with a discussion of the specific characteristics of the Swedish context.

5.1 Research design

The practice of communication between representatives and citizens is by no means a new phenomenon, characterising specifically of contemporary democracies. Such communication has occurred throughout the history of representative democracy, albeit through diverse channels. Elected representatives have sought to listen to the views of citizens, attempted to explain their actions to them, and desired to build relationships of trust with their constituents throughout history. Needless to say, the potential channels for such communication have changed and expanded over time. The growth and diversification of mass media, the weakening of popular mass party organisations, and the introduction of digital communication channels through ICTs are some examples of developments that have impacted the possibility of fostering this kind of communication.

The communicative landscape of contemporary societies is large and diverse. Arguably, political representatives enjoy a greater number of channels as well as more developed communication channels than ever before in the history of representative democracy. Paradoxically, feelings of disconnect between citizens and representatives are also widespread (Coleman & Blumler, 2009, pp. 71-78), and the demand for closer, more communicative relationships, as well as more visible politicians, is also greater than ever (Rosanvallon, 2011). This situation not only stresses the necessity of research of communication between citizens and representatives but also confronts researchers with the difficulty of choosing which communication channels or arenas of communication to investigate.
This thesis addresses the general phenomenon of communication between representatives and citizens by analyses within two particular arenas: participatory initiatives and political blogging. This choice is based on the assumption that the context in which political communication occurs matters. To understand the relationship between representation and political communication, we must therefore relate this relationship to the context in which it plays out. The choice to focus on participatory initiatives and political blogging is justified foremost by their theoretical significance. In two different bodies of literature, participatory initiatives and political blogging are heralded as new, important channels for political communication (see chapter 3) that harbour an alleged potential for a shift toward more communicative relationships between citizens and representatives (Coleman & Moss, 2008; Denters & Klok, 2012; Fung, 2006b; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000; Wright, 2008). Both arenas face similar challenges and, in turn, pose similar challenges to the logics of established institutions within representative democracy. Hence, these arenas offer significant opportunities for exploring theoretically salient questions. Furthermore, these arenas are although being novel research objects relatively well-studied and thus allow several opportunities for comparisons with earlier research.

Even though earlier studies point to flexibility within both arenas, participatory initiatives and political blogging differ in important ways. Participatory initiatives are located within the context of governance and create institutionalised or semi-institutionalised channels for communication that are implemented by governments (including local governments). Political blogs, by contrast, are initiated by the representatives themselves and create personalised and individualised channels for communication for each blogging politician. In earlier research, the political blogosphere is primarily seen as an electoral arena often explored by politicians in relation to election campaigns (Karlsen, 2011 & 2012; Strandberg, 2013). In addition, according to earlier research, political parties are more present in mediating and, to some degree, guiding representatives’ blogging (Benkler & Shaw, 2010; Wright, 2008), while shown to be largely detached from participatory initiatives (Åström, Frechsi & Montin, 2010; Granberg & Åström, 2010). Hence these arenas present two divergent contexts for communication between representatives and citizens, while also being heralded as potentially important arenas for such communication.

While this thesis aims to create possibilities for comparisons between these arenas, their divergent natures have complicated conducting identical empirical studies in both contexts. Instead, the differences between the
arenas require partially divergent methodological approaches. Therefore, differing studies have been implemented although guided by the same theoretical framework and the same sets of central research questions. This strategy creates opportunities for limited comparisons across contexts, but not straight comparative analysis. Although these arenas have been the subjects of earlier research, they have seldom been studied with the same theoretical framework.

5.2 Analytical strategy

Previous research into political representatives’ attitudes toward and practices of communication with citizens generally falls into one of two categories: (1) broad general survey studies among political representatives, and (2) in-depth case studies of single or a few representatives. Recent studies have mapped the attitudes and norms of large numbers of political representatives on a broad set of issues, including political representation and communication with citizens (Bäck, 2000; Copus, 2003; Copus, 2010; Denters & Klok, 2012; Egner et al., 2013; Gilljam et al., 2010a). While these studies provide the field with important information by mapping the attitudes and practices among a large set of representatives, they offer only limited depth in the analysis of representatives’ communicative practices. Since these studies aim to create a representative sample of political representatives, pioneers in relation to new forms of communication constitute only a small part of the sample, thereby causing scarce opportunities for more sophisticated analyses. Secondly, since these studies cover a wide set of issues and topics, only a limited set of survey questions are devoted to communication and representation, which also creates narrow opportunities for exploring these topics. On the other end of the spectrum are in-depth qualitative studies focusing on single or a few representatives, who are often selected for being pioneers of communication with citizens (Coleman & Moss, 2008; Gustafsson, 2013, Stromer–Galley, 2003; Svensson, 2011). Such studies offer the field detailed accounts of the experiences of specific actors but yield little opportunity for generalisation or theory testing.

Neither type of study is particularly well suited for exploring and explaining variations in usage of communication channels. While broader surveys can only explore basic yet important differences between users and non-users, in-depth qualitative studies may assist with creating a more sophisticated understanding of usage patterns among single or a few respondents. The variations in usage among engaged “pioneers” may still be of great theoretical importance in placing theoretical assumptions about
the relationship between representation and new forms of communication under empirical scrutiny. Such studies can investigate the potential existence of systematic differences of usage in relation to differences among representatives related to their normative orientations, strategic considerations, and practical circumstances (see chapter 4). Studies based on strategic samples of “pioneer representatives” create unique opportunities for combining depth of analysis with the potential for (at least limited) generalisability and theory testing.

This thesis presents studies that fall into this category and attempts to gather information from a reasonably large number of respondents strategically chosen for their experiences of the investigated arenas for communication between representatives and citizens. The respondents generally belong to a pioneer group characterised by being relatively early adopters of these arenas and thus unrepresentative of the wider population of political representatives. Analyses conducted on this group of representatives create opportunities to address theoretically relevant issues. For instance, analyses of pioneer actors may be important for understanding the potential for changes in behaviour among the larger collective of actors. While we cannot equate the behaviour of forerunners with the future behaviour of other representatives, insight into these forerunners may be important for understanding the dynamics that made them forerunners, as well as for making informed assumptions about how they differ from other actors.

The relationship between ICTs and politics is an area in which survey studies have been particularly sparse. This is partially due to the large supply of data for content analysis. Researchers interested in this topic have had unique opportunities to gather large quantities of information by coding and compiling content data from websites. The creativity and resourcefulness of these researchers have been significant to exploring potential opportunities for redacting information from the traces of political actions available on the Internet. This possibility can be described as something like a double-edged sword for the field. On the one hand, the analysis of this form of data has greatly advanced the understanding of the relationship, not least through the application of network analysis to indicate the strengths of relationships between different political actors. On the other hand, the field is left with little research into the intentions, motivations, and values of actors related to such actions. The dominance of content analysis creates a gap in the understanding of the consequences of ICTs for politics that is best filled by survey research addressing not only what political actors do online but also why they do it. This information is
essential to the task of relating representatives’ communication with their normative ideals of political representation.

5.3 Empirical materials

The articles presented in this thesis report findings from three different empirical studies: (1) a case study of citizens and representatives participating in the European Citizens’ Consultations, (2) a comparative study of councillors in six Swedish municipalities, and (3) a survey among Swedish blogging politicians. In this section the three different studies will be presented and discussed. The survey questions for each study are presented in Appendix 1, while descriptive statistics are presented in Appendix 2.

5.3.1 Case study of the European Citizens’ Consultations

In order to further investigate the participatory initiatives arena, a case study of one of the most extensive participatory initiatives conducted in Europe, the European Citizens’ Consultations (ECC) (Karlsson, 2010; Karlsson, 2012a; Karlsson, 2012b), was conducted. This study supplies the thesis with a more in-depth study of a single initiative by taking into account the influence of the design of the participatory process, an aspect deemed important in several earlier studies (see Karlsson, 2012a, pp. 64-65 for an overview). As part of the evaluation of ECC, a four-wave survey study, was conducted among participants of the initiative in 2009 (Freudenberger et al., 2009). Participants were surveyed before their participation in the ECC, at the start of the ECC national consultations, at the end of the national consultations, and three months after. The empirical study presented in this thesis (Article I) builds on data from wave three and four from participants of eight of the 28 national consultations\(^ {11}\) for a total of 550 participants. The response rate was 60.5% (n=333\(^ {12}\)). The empirical analyses draw on survey questions related to the participating citizens’ evaluation of the participation of members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in the ECC process, as well as their general level of trust in the European Parliament (EP)\(^ {13}\).

In addition, an online survey was conducted among the 97 MEPs that participated in the national consultations during the spring of 2009. The response rate was very low (17.5%), resulting in data of only 17 respondents. Furthermore, a

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\(^ {11}\) This includes France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, and Sweden.

\(^ {12}\) With answering indicated uncertainty (“don’t know”) included.

\(^ {13}\) For more information, see Article I (pp. 85-86).
large fatigue effect among respondents created a substantial internal loss of data resulting in even fewer respondents for the analysed survey questions. Therefore, no attempts were made to make generalisations regarding the whole group of participating MEPs. This survey included questions addressing whether the MEPs had changed their opinions on any of the issues discussed as a result of their participation in ECC; their forecasts of ECC process’s political impact; and their satisfaction with different aspects of the ECC process.

5.3.2 Comparative survey among Swedish local councillors
The implementation patterns of participatory initiatives have varied among local governments in Sweden. While most local governments have implemented some initiatives, there is a clear group of pioneer municipalities in which extensive numbers of initiatives have been implemented, as well as a hesitator group in which few or no initiatives have occurred (Gilljam & Jodal, 2006). A comparative study was conducted based on a strategic sample of councillors. The selection of municipalities was designed to include councillors in the Swedish municipalities where the most and least numbers of participatory initiatives had been implemented. Selection was based on results from a mapping of participatory initiatives in Swedish municipalities (Gilljam & Jodal, 2006). Three of the cases were chosen among the ten per cent of Swedish municipalities that had implemented the highest number of participatory initiatives. The remaining three cases were chosen among the ten per cent of municipalities that had implemented the least number of initiatives. In accordance with the theory of diffusion of innovations, these case groups were named pioneer and hesitator municipalities (Schmidt, 1986). The selection of cases within these groups aimed to make the two groups comparable. Each group therefore includes one small municipality (<13,000 citizens), one medium sized municipality (between 13,000 and 50,000 citizens), and one larger municipality (>60,000 citizens).

The empirical material was gathered through a postal survey sent to all local councillors in six Swedish municipalities (a total sample of 314 councillors) in 2008. The overall response rate was 60.5% (n=190), and varied between 51% and 64.6% across municipalities. In general, respondents were fairly representative of Swedish councillors in terms of age and gender, while councillors with post-secondary education were slightly overrepresented (+6.5%) and those with secondary education underrepresented (-9.4%). Regarding party affiliation, the sample includes an underrepresentation of councillors from the Moderate Party (-7.56%).

14 For more information, see Karlsson, 2008, pp. 34-38.
The survey included questions about the councillors’ attitudes toward participatory initiatives and communication with citizens, reported practices of communication with citizens, and normative roles of representation. Data were also gathered on the councillors’ ages, genders, and levels of education, as well as their party affiliations and parliamentary positions (i.e., whether they belonged to their municipality’s ruling majority or opposition).\(^\text{15}\)

### 5.3.3 Survey among Swedish political bloggers

Turning from the arena of participatory initiatives to the political blogosphere, different methodological opportunities and challenges were encountered. The relatively large number of Swedish politicians engaged in blogging created opportunities for exploring variations in communication within this group of pioneers. Earlier research has underscored the tendency of different parties to engage in blogging in divergent ways (Benkler & Shaw, 2010; Karlsen, 2009; Karpf, 2009), rendering party differences an important issue for analysis.

An online survey was conducted among blogging politicians in Sweden. A list of a total of 2,103 political bloggers was compiled using the Swedish political blogging portal Politometern in May 2010. Contact information for these bloggers was gathered during the summer, and the survey was distributed to all bloggers for which contact information could be found after the elections in September 2010. A total of 1,112 respondents received the survey (53% of all listed bloggers). The survey was answered by 730 bloggers, thus creating an overall response rate of 66% (equating to a 35% sample of all listed bloggers) making this one of the largest surveys among political bloggers to date. A subsample of 604 respondents who were politicians—either candidates in the 2010 elections or incumbents before the elections—formed the basis for the analyses.\(^\text{16}\)

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\(^{15}\) For more information about the operationalisation of these concepts, see Article II (pp. 799-805) and Appendix 1.

\(^{16}\) Due to a difference in selection principles, the number of respondents differs between the three articles on political blogging. As the first study focused on political campaigning (Article III), all politicians in the data were included (incumbents as well as candidates in the 2010 elections). The second study was particularly interested in political representatives and thus included only incumbents holding a political office at the time of the survey. In the last study, which also focuses on representation, stricter criteria for inclusion were applied and excluded politicians holding positions outside of elected and appointed political assemblies (e.g., positions within party organisations, unions, or the convocation of the Swedish church.)
response rate was largely unknown since it was difficult to judge how many of the 2,103 bloggers listed on the Politometern portal were in fact politicians.

This survey covered a variety of topics, including politicians’ use of their blogs for communication with citizens, their habits of blogging (i.e., frequency of writing blog posts, reading other blogs, and their experience of blogging), normative roles of representation, usage of their blog for supporting a personal election campaign, focus of blog content (i.e., focus on party or person and on local or national issues), and their confidence in the political impact of social media. Survey data were also complemented with data on the political majority in each political assembly, in which the respondents were represented according to the KFAKTA database (Johansson, 2010), as well as a network centrality index measuring each respondent’s position within the hierarchy of the Swedish political blogosphere from Politometern.

5.4 Sweden as a critical case

Sweden is a country characterised by a form of representative democracy that awards political parties a particularly strong position. This trait is evident both in the institutional arrangements as well as in the party culture. At the same time, Swedish citizens enjoy one of the most individualised political cultures in the world (Inglehart & Welzel, 2010). While political parties remain comparably strong, citizens engage less as party members, identify less strongly with a political party, and remain less loyal to a specific political party in subsequent elections than ever before. This somewhat paradoxical political culture makes Sweden a particularly interesting case in relation to the topic of this thesis. Swedish representatives can be described as experiencing cross-pressure as political parties and democratic institutions promote a party-centric and collectivistic culture, while citizens have started to turn their backs on this culture and increasingly promote new and individualised ways of influencing politics and their representatives. While political communication, through channels such as participatory initiatives and blogs, is in line with the preferences of the citizens, it poses a sharp contrast to the collectivistic nature of Swedish party culture.

5.41 Political institutions and party culture

Political parties have traditionally been the central institutions for organising political representation in Sweden. All citizens that wish to run for any political office are required to either seek nomination by an existing political party or register a new party. Hence, Swedish electoral laws do not allow individuals outside of party organisations to participate as candi-
dates in elections. As a result, all political representatives in Sweden represent a party with the rare exception of political mavericks (*politiska villdar*) that have left their respective parties once in office, either by being excluded from the party or choosing to leave the party.

Figure 2. Share of party delegate representatives among Swedish representatives, 1968-2008

![Graph showing the share of party delegate representatives among Swedish representatives from 1968 to 2008.](image)

*Source: Data were gathered from Gilljam et al., (2010a) and reflect the share of local councillors and national representatives who answered that they would vote in accordance with their party group in the case of a conflict between the position of their party group, the voters, and their own conviction in relation to an important political issue.*

The ties between parties and their representatives are further strengthened by party membership. As a response to a vast decrease in party members, several Swedish parties have changed their statutes to allow non-party members to also participate in elections and to hold offices for the party (Karlsson & Lundberg, 2011). Still, very few non-party members are found among Swedish representatives. In a recent survey, 99.6% of Swedish local councillors were members of a political party (Razin 2013, p. 54). Clearly, Swedish representatives have become increasingly party loyal during the last half of the 20th century, according to survey studies (Bäck, 2000; Gilljam et al., 2010b; Wallin et al., 1981). These studies have investigated the distribution of normative roles of representation (as presented in chapter 2) between
Swedish representatives at the local and national levels. As shown in the figure above, less than 25% of national and local representatives adhered to the party delegate role at the end of the 1960s. While the local politicians’ roles have trended toward stronger party loyalty in an almost linear positive direction, national politicians went through a more radical shift toward the party delegate role between the studies in 1969 and 1985, after which the share of party delegates have steadily dropped.

During this period of a clear development toward stronger party loyalty (at least among local councillors) a stronger system of preferential voting was implemented in Sweden (see Figure 2 above). The new preferential voting system was first tested in local elections in some municipalities in 1994 and has been used in all national, regional and local elections since 1998. The strengthening of the preferential voting system could potentially decrease party loyalty among representatives but has been shown to have little impact on the outcome of elections. While between 25% and 16% of the members of the national parliament have been elected through preferential voting in the four elections since the introduction of the new system (Statistics Sweden, 2010), a large majority of these representatives would have gained their seats even without the support of preferential votes (Nielsen, 2007, pp. 60-62). The same goes for local councillors and regional councillors among which only 5% respectively 3% were elected solely through preferential voting (Election Authority of Sweden, 2010). Since the strengthening of the preferential voting system has produced little change in the parties’ influence over who gets elected and the trend toward increasing party loyalty among politicians has remained since the introduction of this system (although exclusively among local councillors) we can conclude that Swedish parties are still strong despite this institutional change.

The strength of parties in the Swedish democratic system is further evident in comparative studies. In a recent study the division of power between parties and citizens in local democracy in 16 countries (15 European countries and Israel), Sweden was found to be the strongest example of a “party democracy”. Based on institutional indicators as well as voting behaviour, the researchers concluded that in Sweden citizens had the least power over local democracy in relation to political parties (Denters & Klok, 2012, p. 9). The lack of both directly elected mayors and citizen-initiated binding referendums, the low proportion of local councillors elected by preferential voting, and the scarcity of both independent candidates and local parties justified this ranking. On a Citizen Democracy Institutions score from 0 to 1, for which 0 indicated a full “party democracy” and 1 a full “citizen democracy”, Sweden
received the value 0.03. The mean value among all countries compared was 37.1 and was 35.5 among European countries (Denters & Klok, 2012).

Apart from political representation, political participation has also been channelled mainly through political parties (Amnå, 2006; Montin, 2005). Political parties have traditionally been viewed as the central organisations for fostering and channelling citizens' efforts to participate in politics. This tradition extends back to the early democratic history of Sweden, when citizen participation was organised in popular mass movements, such as the suffrage movement, the labour movement, the temperance movement and, not least, the rise of popular mass parties. The collectivistic tradition of political participation in Sweden coupled with the strong position of civil society prevailed for the better part of the 20th century. After the democratisation of Sweden, political parties soon took the form of popular mass parties, each with comparably large membership, organisation, but with varying degrees of membership-centric systems of internal democracy. The introduction of participatory initiatives in the last decades of the 20th century, that created arenas for political participation located outside or beside both political parties and civil society organisations, thus poses a sharp contrast to the tradition.

5.4.2 Political culture and the weakening of party legitimacy

By contrast to the picture of Swedish democracy painted above, as a country characterised by strong parties and party loyal representatives, the political culture among Swedish citizens has developed in a much more individualistic direction. In the world values survey map of global political cultures (Inglehart & Welzel, 2010, p. 554), Sweden stands out as the country where post-materialistic values are the strongest. Swedes prioritise self-expression values the most highly, and next to the Japanese, are those among whom secular-rational values are most dispersed. The development toward post-materialism related to a rise in socio-economic status appears to have taken its toll on Swedish citizens' support for its collectivistic and party-centric system of democracy. The formerly strong mass popular movements, including political parties, lost a large share of their members (Karlsson & Lundberg, 2011). Currently, fewer and fewer citizens identify strongly with a political party (Statistics Sweden, 2013) and fewer voters remain loyal to a political party in consecutive elections (Holmberg & Oscarsson, 2011, pp. 41ff.).

This development, however, does not suggest a decreasing sense of legitimacy for Swedish democracy as a whole. Participation in elections is still at a comparably high level. Moreover, after a long period of steady de-
cline, Swedish citizens’ trust in political parties as well as governmental institutions has risen in the last few decades (Holmberg, 1999a; Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2011, pp. 27ff.; Weibull, Oscarsson, & Bergström, 2012, p. 11). Nor does the decline in participation through political parties coincide with any wider trend toward weaker political engagement in Sweden (Andersen, 2006). Instead, it seems that Swedish citizens are seeking new ways of engagement that are less institutionalised, permanent, dutiful, and collectivistic (Andersen, 2006, pp. 45-47).

Taken together, these contrasting developments paint an image of the Swedish political context that recommends it as a critical case for investigating the relationship between political representation and communication with citizens. The potential divide between old institutions and civic culture, as described in the introduction, may be most evident in this context. While established institutions and party organisations have maintained a party-centric ideal for democracy, substantial changes have occurred in the values of citizens, who appear to be moving toward a culture seemingly at odds with the established system of representative democracy. Regarding the role of political representatives—the main actors investigated in this thesis—the institutional context of Swedish democracy creates unfavourable conditions for communication with citizens. The resistance to change from a party-centric to a more individualised and citizen-oriented form of representation, as well as political communication, ought to be strong among established elites. At the same time, the demand for such communication ought to be high given the broader political culture of Swedish citizens. Therefore, investigations of this relationship in this particular context are highly theoretically relevant and may create a basis for an advanced understanding of the relationship between representative democracy and processes of communication among representatives and citizens.
6 Results and conclusions

This chapter summarizes the results of Articles I-V and follows with the overall conclusions of the thesis, in which the research questions are answered and the overall implications of the studies are discussed.

6.1 Article summaries

6.1.1 Article I

In the wake of growing dissent toward EU institutions among European citizens that culminated in the defeat of referendum on the Lisbon treaty, the EU has in recent years implemented a number of participatory initiatives aimed at strengthening the relationship between European citizens and EU institutions. These participatory initiatives have been designed to ensure a high quality of participation by combining several different forms of participation and including citizens from the entire EU. Nevertheless, the question of whether the initiatives have reflected the roles and rationales of political representatives in their design is still largely unexplored. The EU-initiated participatory initiatives have often explicitly aimed to aid political representation by way of closing the gap between citizens and EU policymakers, as well as by using citizens’ input as advice for politicians at the EU level (Gastil, 2013, p. 223; Karlsson, 2010). It is, however, still largely uncertain whether the design of the participatory processes has been instrumental in achieving these objectives.

Article I investigates the most extensive of these projects, the European Citizens’ Consultations (ECC), with a focus on the relationship between citizens and MEPs. By focusing on the functioning of participatory initiative in relation to political representation in the EU, Article I highlights an often forgotten but important aspect of participatory initiatives. To foster an understanding of the functioning of this particular participatory initiative in aiding political representation, two potential functions of participatory processes for strengthening political representation are identified and analysed: the connectivity function and the inquiry function. The results indicate that the ECC project falls short of offering a functional tool for strengthening political representation. Participating representatives are shown to express disappointment with the project, while participating citizens are revealed to show signs of growing rather than decreasing dissent with the EP following their participation. This analysis suggests that the shortcomings of the ECC project stem from an insufficient understand-
The results highlight the importance of incorporating a sufficient understanding of both the role and objectives of political representatives in the design of participatory initiatives.

6.1.2 Article II

A common position in the debate regarding citizen participation and representative government is that political participation supports democracy only to the extent that it is compatible with the core principles of representative democracy and existing democratic institutions (Article II, p. 799). The relationship between participatory initiatives and established institutions is thus of great importance when evaluating the possibilities of such initiatives’ reinvigorating local democracy. As Article I indicates, this aspect is often forgotten in studies of citizen participation. Article II thus aims to evaluate this relationship with an analysis of local councillors in Sweden.

The empirical analyses were based on a comparative survey in six Swedish municipalities. Councillors in municipalities where extensive numbers of participatory initiatives had been implemented (pioneers) were compared with councillors in municipalities that have hesitated to introduce participatory initiatives (i.e., hesitators). The analyses explore how local councillors with diverging experiences with participatory initiatives communicate with citizens, as well as their attitudes toward citizen participation in local democracy, and their normative views on political representation. The comparisons between municipalities, as well as between councillors from different parties and in different parliamentary positions, inform the research question that addresses differences in communication between groups of representatives.

The results indicate that councillors in pioneer municipalities hold more enthusiastic attitudes toward citizen participation in local democracy and engage in communication with citizens more actively than councillors in hesitator municipalities. Nevertheless, councillors in pioneer and hesitator municipalities retain similar normative orientations regarding political representation. The results thus suggest that local participatory initiatives may stimulate political representation by creating new channels for citizen input and communication between citizens and representatives. However, the core roles of parties and councillors in representative democracy do not appear to have been challenged by these initiatives.

17 The method and material of this survey is described in section 5.3.1.
6.1.3 Article III

With Article III, the focus is shifted from participatory initiatives to a relatively new arena for political communication: the blogosphere. The rise of social media as a new and interactive arena for political communication has sparked hope for the potential reinvigoration of the relationship between citizens and representatives (cf. Coleman, 2005a & 2005b). Article III addresses this arena broadly as a sphere for political campaigning. Earlier research has shown that the adoption and use of blogging among politicians varies between political contexts and institutional settings. More importantly, the role of parties within the political system seems to shape politicians’ engagement with blogging. In an attempt to foster a greater understanding of the factors that shape politicians’ engagement with the blogosphere in the Swedish political context, this article explores variations in political blogging between parties during the election campaigns of 2010. Sweden is a country characterised by comparably strong political parties and a party-centred form of representative democracy that creates limited incentives for candidate-centred campaigns. As such, the country makes an interesting case for investigating the use of political blogging, which is commonly described as a highly individualised practice of political communication.

The empirical analyses of Article III use data from a survey among blogging politicians in Sweden (described in section 5.2.3) and provide results clearly indicating that different parties use blogging in different ways. Politicians from the parties in the centre- and the right of the political spectrum, characterised by advocating more individualistic forms of campaigning, are more strongly represented in the political blogosphere and use their blogs in an individualised manner. Politicians from the parties on the left, characterised by a more collectivistic party culture, instead use blogging as a more party-oriented communication tool focused on promoting their parties’ positions more than their individual positions. Subsequent analyses of the network centrality of political blogs indicate that bloggers on the left, although using blogging in a collectivistic fashion, are widely successful in gaining central positions in the Swedish blogosphere. In sum, the results underscore the importance of party culture and ideologies in shaping politicians’ engagement in the blogosphere and ultimately portray blogging as a strongly ideologically situated practice of political communication.

By extension, Article III informs the broader debate about the influence of ICTs on politics by indicating that the uptake and use of ICTs is strongly shaped by ideological and organisational factors. At the same time, the results in no way preclude the possibility of the influence of communica-
tion technologies, such as blogs, on political campaigning. Instead, they show that politicians in a party-centric context, such as Sweden, employ blogging for individualistic campaign efforts to a large extent.

6.1.4 Article IV
The second article examining the political blogosphere turns its attention away from blog use during election campaigns to instead focus on political representation. Article IV builds on a tradition of scholarly work that has investigated the possibility of ICTs to support a more direct and communicative relationship between representatives and citizens (Åström, 2004; Coleman, 2005a; Norton, 2007; Zittel, 2003). In this article a theoretical framework is developed for investigating the use of communication between citizens and representatives with the purpose of aiding political representation. On the basis of this theoretical framework, empirical analyses are conducted among blogging politicians in Sweden with the aim to investigate the extent to which politicians use blogs to support their roles as representatives. The theoretical framework presented identifies three strategic functions that communication between representatives and citizens may serve for political representation: Accountability, Connectivity and Inquiry (also presented in section 2.3.1). The argument is that these strategic functions are applicable for representatives with varying normative ideals of political representation.

The empirical analyses conducted among blogging politicians in Sweden support this argument by indicating a wide uptake of communication with citizens through blogging for the purposes of performing these functions. The analyses also indicate a connection between the strategic use of political blogging and reported practices of political communication. Blogging representatives that claim to use blogging for the purpose of aiding political representation, write blog posts more frequently, allow readers to submit comments more often, and respond to those comments more frequently.

6.1.5 Article V
Building on the empirical results and theoretical developments of Articles III and IV, Article V presents an empirical investigation into the use of communication in the blogosphere with the purpose of aiding political representation among Swedish politicians. As such, the empirical analyses of this article develop the most straightforward test of the research questions of the thesis related to political blogging.
Though studies have pointed out that the blogosphere holds great potential for enhancing political communication between citizens and representatives, established theoretical models of the relationship between ICTs and political representation have arguably held a too narrow conception about how this potential could be realised. Such models, although varying to some extent, have often put forward the argument that collectivistic party cultures demanding loyalty and cohesion from their representatives conflict with a communicative relationship between citizens and representatives. By extension, this argument has produced theoretical models that see political individualism (i.e., in the sense of freedom from party collectivism) as a prerequisite for actualising ICTs potential for aiding political representation (Coleman, 2005a; Coleman & Blumler, 2009; Zittel, 2003).

Article V challenges this assumption and presents a theoretical framework for exploring different modes of communication in the political blogosphere, along two orthogonal dimensions. The first dimension differentiates party-oriented from individually oriented political bloggers, while the second dimension differentiates representatives in relation to their usage of blogging to support political representation. The framework creates four different modes of blogging: party-presentation, self-presentation, intermediate representation and direct representation. Hence, the theoretical framework presented allows for the assumptions of earlier models to be put under empirical scrutiny.

The empirical analyses reveal that the blogosphere is an arena for political representation, for large shares of blogging politicians reported using blogs in order to aid central functions of political representation. The results show that individualistic (i.e., direct representation) as well as party-oriented politicians (i.e., intermediate representation) use blogging to aid political representation. The analyses thus indicate that a mode of blogging beneficial for political representation is in fact possible also among politicians nested in collectivistic party cultures.

Article V furthermore investigates which factors explain variations in modes of communication in the blogosphere. Two key factors distinguish politicians who use blogging for representational communication from other blogging politicians; the former (1) share a higher confidence in the political importance of social media, as well as exhibit higher activity in their blogging; and (2) they share a predominant focus on local, not national, political issues in their blogging. The results also show important differences between the two groups of politicians who use blogging to aid political representation; (1) they differ substantially with regard to ideo-
logical orientation and norms of political representation, for individualistic politicians stand further to the right and are more likely to be sovereign trustee representatives; and (2) the individualistic political bloggers are also more likely to belong to the political majority.

In sum, Article V demonstrates that the blogosphere in fact poses the potential to aid political representation and that the modes of communication selected by politicians vary in relation to normative, strategic, and technological factors. Thus, the promise of the political blogosphere to cultivate a more communicative form of political representation is mediated by the environments (organisational, ideological, institutional, and technical) in which political representatives act.

6.2 Conclusions
The articles above and studies conducted in this thesis analyse a broad set of issues related to practices of communication among politicians. Among other things, the studies have investigated the use of participatory initiatives in the EU (Article I), mapped the attitudes toward participatory initiatives and practices of communication among local councillors in Sweden (Article II), and analysed Swedish politicians’ engagement in political blogging as a campaign tool (Article III), as well as a tool for political representation (Articles IV and V). The individual articles and studies address a number of research questions related to this thesis’s topic. Instead of attempting to sum up the answers to these questions, this concluding chapter will discuss the overall aim of the thesis in light of the findings of these studies. In doing so, this conclusion functions as a synthesis of the analyses included and aims to address the most theoretically relevant findings of the studies in service of both the aim and research questions of the thesis.

The thesis has sought to increase our understanding of how new forms of communication with citizens, through participatory initiatives as well as political blogging, are utilized by politicians in their role as political representatives. This aim has been addressed with both theoretical development and empirical analyses guided by the following research questions:

1. How do representatives communicate with citizens through participatory initiatives and political blogging in order to aid central functions of political representation?
2. What factors explain differences in representatives’ communication with citizens through participatory initiatives and political blogging?

These questions will structure the presentation of the conclusions and lead to a discussion that identifies the results’ chief implications.

6.2.1 Mapping representatives’ communication with citizens

The emergence of participatory initiatives and blogging among politicians can partly be understood as a consequence of the decreasing legitimacy for established institutions of representative democracy (see chapter 1; Coleman, 2005b; Zittel & Fuchs, 2007). As citizens’ support for political parties becomes weaker, the need for exploring new channels of communication grows stronger. The theoretical framework employed in this thesis presents three functions of communication that could support the traditional trustee, (citizen) delegate, and party delegate roles of representation. Participatory initiatives and blogging could function as a channel for accountability, for gathering policy ideas and information about citizens’ preferences (inquiry), and for rebuilding trust by way of fostering a closer relationship with citizens (connectivity) (see section 2.3.1).

Much of the earlier empirical work has illustrated a decoupling between new forms of communication and representation. Political representatives prove to be surprisingly hesitant in engaging with the participatory initiatives they have hosted (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2006; Granberg & Åström, 2010; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000; Yetano et al., 2010), and their use of social media has usually failed to live up to the expectations of fostering a closer and more communicative relationship between representative and citizens (Benkler & Shaw, 2010; Coleman, 2005b; Stromer–Galley, 2000; Zittel, 2003;). For these reasons, some scholars have argued that we stand before incompatible logics, as the culture of loyalty within political parties becomes contrasted by the ethos of open-mindedness and knowledge-sharing in participatory processes and new media environments (Coleman, 2005b; Wright, 2008).

The results of this thesis recommend a somewhat different conclusion. For sure, the case study of the European Citizens’ Consultations finds clear evidence of decoupling (Article I). Even though this participatory initiative specifically aimed to serve the inquiry and connectivity functions of MEPs in great need of new forms of communication, the process was ultimately found unsuccessful in creating a functional arena for communication be-
tween citizens and representatives. The study found evidence of decreasing trust for the EP among participating citizens, as well as disappointment with the policy input from citizens among participating representatives. The study is thus a good illustration of the perils of fostering communication between citizens and representatives found in earlier research.

However, subsequent studies in this thesis indicate that political representatives to a relatively large extent engage in communication with citizens through participatory initiatives and blogging with the aim to aid their roles as political representatives. The study of local councillors’ engagement in participatory initiatives found wide support for citizen participation in local democracy (Article II), as well as of the importance of communicating with citizens for both purposes of inquiry and aiding accountability. In both cases, over 70% of respondents agreed that a representative should engage in discussion with voters in order to account for their actions and decisions (accountability) and to be able to make good decisions (inquiry).18

The studies of blogging politicians (Articles IV and V) found that a majority report to frequently use their blogs for the purpose of aiding one or more function (Article IV, p. 1214), but there are vast differences between these functions. Though only about one in every five representatives uses blogs frequently in order to inquire among citizens about their views and ideas (inquiry), the majority frequently uses their blogs in order to explain policy decisions (accountability) and foster a trusting relationship with their voters (connectivity). Thus, it seems that blogging politicians generally use blogs for communicating to citizens instead of getting input from them, a result that corresponds to earlier studies of political blogging (cf. Koop & Jansen, 2009; Wright, 2008). This pattern has been said to demonstrate that representatives in a party-centric system find asking for policy ideas and views from citizens redundant or potentially in conflict with their established conduct as representatives (Wright, 2008).

Comparisons between the two arenas facilitated by this thesis indicate that the interest in inquiring among citizens for information is lower in the

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18 These descriptive results are not presented in Article II but stem from an analysis of two survey questions measuring the extent to which respondents agree with the statements described in the text. Answers were given on a ten-point scale for which the lowest value (1) meant “to strongly disagree” with the statement and the highest value (10) meant “to strongly agree”. All respondents giving an answer six or higher were coded as agreeing with the statement to some degree.
blog arena than among local councillors engaging with participatory initiatives. How can this difference be understood? One possible interpretation is that aspects of the blog medium itself offer an explanation. While political blogs do provide opportunities for communication with readers—through comment fields, for instance—the medium allows for a number of different applications. Communicating outward to readers is undoubtedly the most important feature of political blogs. Participatory initiatives, by contrast, are arguably designed foremost to serve the inquiry function, for they often create an arena for citizens to formulate and present recommendations for policy change to representatives. In light of these differences between the two arenas, the divergent results are less surprising.

Article V further stresses the flexibility of blogs in finding that representatives use political blogging to aid political representation in divergent ways. While some representatives use blogs for an individualised form of communication that resembles earlier theoretical models (Coleman, 2005a; Zittel, 2003), a large group of blogging (intermediate) representatives engages in communication with citizens in order to strengthen political representation but while maintaining a party-centric focus in their communication. This result challenges the argument that these new forms of communication are incompatible with a culture of party loyalty among representatives. As far as can be seen, these representatives seem to find a way of combining the two.

6.2.2 Explaining variations in representatives’ communication
As made evident by the preceding section, there is much variation in how representatives engage in communication with citizens through participatory initiatives and political blogging. While a large share of respondents to the studies included in this thesis use communication with citizens in the two arenas to aid their roles as political representatives, not all respondents do. There is also evidence of variation in how representatives communicate with citizens. In light of these variations, this thesis has sought to answer the question: What factors explain differences in representatives’ communication with citizens through participatory initiatives and political blogging? Three explanatory perspectives are employed in the analyses guided by this research question: strategic considerations, practical circumstances, and normative orientations. The studies presented in this thesis vindicate the importance of all three perspectives in understanding politicians’ engagement with participatory initiatives and political blogging, as well as their use of communication to aid political representation.
The strategic perspective gains support with investigations in both arenas. One interesting conclusion is that representatives of the majority are shown to be more willing than the opposition to engage in communication with citizens in order to aid their roles as representatives (Articles II and V). These findings depart from the expectations of earlier research that political underdogs ought to employ more innovative forms of political communication (cf. Karpf, 2009). Still, the results agree with findings among Swedish MPs showing that members of the government hold more enthusiastic attitudes toward citizens’ attempts to contact politicians than members of the opposition (Naurin & Öhberg, 2013, pp. 82-83). The findings also correspond to earlier research indicating that Swedish citizens are willing to communicate foremost with representatives in powerful positions (Wrenne, 1997). Hence, these somewhat surprising results should be understood in the light of a difference in attitude toward communication with citizens related to parliamentary position but also citizens’ higher demand for communication with members of the majority. One potential implication of these results is that communicative forms of representation through arenas such as participatory initiatives and blogs serve the political majority more than its challengers. Hence, pre-existing power hierarchies seem to be reinforced by such practices, not challenged.

A second important finding is that blogging representatives who focus on local political issues are more likely to use their blogs to aid political representation than representatives with a national political focus (Article V). This result, in line with earlier expectations, indicates that the largest potential for the development of a more communicative form of representation is found in local democracy. In a local setting, citizens and representatives live closer to each other and are more likely to cross paths with each other, which is touted to increase representatives’ responsiveness to citizens’ wishes in local democracies (Mill, 1861). Furthermore, proponents of decentralised government argue that localised processes create stronger possibilities for the involvement of citizens in democratic governance (Escobar–Lemmon & Ross, 2013, p. 3). Altogether, these findings suggest that representatives clearly consider the context they face when deciding how to communicate with their constituents (Lipinski & Cooper, 2003). In other words, institutional settings and representatives’ positions within these institutions seem to play important roles in shaping the incentive structures around strategies for political communication and representation.
The studies in this thesis illustrate that representatives’ earlier experiences play a great role in explaining variations in their engagement with participatory initiatives and political blogging. The experiences of participatory initiatives in the local government of councilors are shown to strongly influence their attitudes toward such initiatives, as well as their engagement in communication with citizens (Article II). Moreover, representatives with more blogging experience are more likely to use their blogs for more innovative and challenging purposes (Articles III, IV, and V). Both results point toward the potential for change in the relationship between citizens and representatives, for they indicate that politicians that have greater experiences of these arenas are more willing to use them in ways that deviate from the traditions and culture of Swedish representatives. Further, the studies of blogging indicate that greater confidence in the political importance of social media increases the likelihood that blogging politicians will use their blogs to aid political representation. On a similar note, the studies also show that politicians who use blogs frequently and spend more time blogging are more inclined to communicate with citizens in order to aid representation (Articles IV and V), as well as to use their blogs in a more individualised manner (Article III).

In terms of explaining variations in representatives’ communication with citizens, the largest contribution to research of political blogging may nevertheless emerge in the analyses of the normative perspective. As the strategic and technological perspectives have been the central foci in the field, little attention has been given to the influence of ideologies and parties. While the studies of participatory initiatives indicate little influence of ideological orientations on representatives’ attitudes and behaviours (Article II), the political blogosphere appears to be an arena for communication that is highly ideologically situated. Article III finds that politicians’ blogging is strongly shaped by political parties and ideological orientations. Ideologically, politicians at the centre and right are more strongly represented in the blogosphere and use blogging for candidate-centred campaigns more often than politicians on the left. Article V supports this finding by showing that right-oriented politicians prove to use blogging in more individualised fashions.

The studies in this thesis, nonetheless, do not indicate that normative orientations influence the use of blogging for the functions of inquiry, accountability, or connectivity. Instead, strategic considerations and practical circumstances seem to primarily explain variations. The analyses in Article V, however, feature one important exception to the pat-
tern. While earlier analyses (Article IV, section 6.2.1) show no indications of a relationship between normative role orientations and the use of communication with citizens to support political representation, the analyses of Article V tell a different story. Its analyses show that representatives who combine an individual blog focus and uses their blogs to perform the functions of inquiry, accountability, and connectivity (i.e., the position named “direct representation” in Article V) are more likely to adhere to a trustee role of representation. This normative orientation highlights the importance of a representative’s independence from his or her party as well as from constituents (see section 2.1.3). Hence, the analyses indicate that a more individualised form of representational communication is reinforced by a normative stance that sees representatives as free agents who should act independently of party instructions and the wishes of their constituents.

From the perspective of the theoretical models presented in this thesis, the interpretation presented above is arguably the most probable. Still, based on the merely cross-sectional analyses presented in this thesis, the possibility of a reversed causality cannot be fully dismissed. It is possible that these politicians’ engagement with blogging has influenced their normative views of representation in a more individualised direction. This interpretation concurs with the perspective on technology as an agent in processes of development and change (cf. Norris, 2001, p. 106). On a similar note, Zittel argues that the emergence of new ICTs has decreased the costs of communication between representatives and citizens and resulted in a situation in which “political parties could become less relevant to individual representatives as a mechanism for political communication and interaction” (2003, p. 37). In this specific case, the use of technology could have led to alterations in the representatives’ normative orientations toward representation, not vice versa.

All in all, the results of this thesis indicate that strategic and practical factors play greater roles than normative factors in explaining variations in political representatives’ use of participatory initiatives and political blogging to bolster their roles as representatives. While normative orientations are undoubtedly important for understanding political bloggers’ focus on party or person, the results generally give little support for the conclusion that ideology, party affiliation, and normative orientations toward political representation influence the usage of blogs for purposes of aiding the functions of inquiry, accountability, and connectivity.
6.3 Broader implications

Raising our eyes from the research questions that have driven these studies, we can now ask what the wider implications these results are. In doing so, it can be instructive to revisit the challenges for political representation in contemporary democracy as they were presented in the introduction. There contemporary systems of government were depicted as strongly dependent on political parties that at once offer stability but also face vast challenges in terms of declining legitimacy in the eyes of the citizenry. Political parties seem, in the words of Katz and Mair, to be “at once stronger, but also more remote; at once more in control, but also less powerful; at once more privileged, but also less legitimate” (Katz & Mair, 1994, p. 19). During the second half of the 20th century and onward, Swedish representatives have increasingly acted as loyal party representatives (Karlsson, 2011), while citizens have become decreasingly willing to join political parties as members (Karlsson & Lundberg, 2011) as well as to identify with political parties (Statistics Sweden, 2013). The current situation ultimately indicates a growing distance between representatives and citizens—a distance that new forms of communication between representatives and citizens could potentially help remedy.

This thesis has investigated two arenas for such communication, participatory initiatives and political blogs. Participatory initiatives form arenas in which groups of representatives and citizens may communicate and cooperate in solving policy issues. Representatives’ presence in the political blogosphere creates channels through which politicians are easily accessible to citizens and, like participatory initiatives, offer a space for representatives and citizens to communicate. Still the theoretical potential of these arenas’ reinvigorating the relationship between citizens and representatives has proven to be poorly realized in practice. Politicians’ engagement with participatory initiatives has often been half-hearted and hesitant (Amnå, 2006; Granberg & Åström, 2010; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000), and some scholars have gone so far as to deem participatory initiatives and representative democracy incompatible (Esaiasson, 2010; McKenna, 2011). In a similar fashion scholars have expressed a strong scepticism regarding the potential of politicians’ engagement with blogging and other forms of ICT based communication to create functional channels for communication between citizens and representatives (Coleman, 2005b; Wright, 2008). In both cases the apparent differences in logic between the established institutions of representative democracy and these new channels for participation, as well as communication, are deemed to be the root of the problem.
It is against this background of apparent need for new channels of communication between citizens and representatives, as well as the indications of the incompatibility between the logic of representative democracy and the innovations that aim to offer new channels for representative democracy, that the studies in this thesis are constructed and conducted. These studies have attempted to contribute to the understanding of the potential of these arenas in addressing the challenges of representative democracy by investigating how political representatives view and engage with such innovations. In more concrete terms, how politicians communicate with citizens in order to aid their roles as representatives lies at the centre of the analyses. The central argument of the thesis is that such innovation may contribute to representative democracy only to the extent that it offers representatives efficient channels for performing functions related to political representation.

The analyses generally point in a more optimistic direction compared to the accounts above. A large share of the representatives analysed in this thesis engage in communication with citizens in order to support their roles as representatives. Among this group, we furthermore find politicians that hold divergent normative orientations toward political representation: delegates, and trustees, as well party delegates. Hence, representatives that use participatory initiatives and political blogging to aid political representation do not generally hold normative orientations regarding representation that challenge the established logic of representative democracy.

On the other hand, the fact that politicians are less willing to engage in communication to gather information from the public than to communicate information to them corresponds with the suspicions from earlier research that such communication is in fact incompatible, or at least less harmonious with established institutions. The analyses of politicians’ blogging also indicate that politicians from the centre or right parties are more willing to engage with this innovation and to use it in a more individualistic way than their colleagues on the left. Since the parties on the left are known to have both a more collectivistic party culture and representatives that highly value party loyalty, this result may confirm the suspicion of Coleman and others that collectivistic party culture and the culture of blogging may not be fully harmonious. Still, the analyses do not suggest that politicians on the left use blogging for political representation to a lesser degree, but that they instead adapt this form of communication to suit a more party-centric form of representation.

On the whole, these studies thus indicate that the pessimistic outlook of previous scholarly work may have been exaggerated. Instead of viewing
representative democracy and communication with citizens through participatory initiatives or political blogging as competitive, results indicate that a more fruitful outlook might be to see both logics as partially flexible. On a more fundamental level, this view entails creating an understanding of participatory initiatives and politicians’ attempts to communicate with citizens as complementary to the established logics of representative democracy instead of as an alternative to them.

Returning to the metaphor of covering distances presented in the introduction, this thesis paints a picture of political representatives who, like Roederer, emphasise “traveling” as a means to ensure a functioning democracy. These political representatives are unsatisfied with the procedural promise of representative democracy to produce representation and instead see it as their own responsibility to act toward fulfilling this promise by engaging in communication with those they represent. The way they do this is mediated by a number of factors. This thesis’s studies indicate that representatives adapt their strategies of communication to suit their specific situations and contexts.

While the conclusion points toward an optimistic view of the potential for communication in these new arenas to cover the distances apparent in contemporary representative democracy, it is important to stress that this thesis is based on analyses of strategically chosen samples of “pioneers”, not representative samples of politicians. The respondents of these studies are either local councillors or MEPs, both of whom engage in participatory initiatives, or else politicians who have engaged with political blogging. Broad generalisations to other representatives in Sweden cannot therefore be justified. Still, since the results show that these pioneers find communication with citizens through participatory initiatives and blogging to potentially benefit their roles as representatives in a party-centric context, it is clearly indicated that future change is possible also among the wider collective of elected representatives. As has been argued by this thesis, Sweden offers a critical case characterised by strong political parties containing highly party-loyal representatives.

The explorations of these explanatory perspectives additionally indicate the possibility of development that would cultivate a more communicative relationship between citizens and representatives, as strategic considerations and practical circumstances—factors prone to vary over time—are found to be important driving forces behind politicians’ engagement in communication with citizens to aid their roles as representatives. In this
regard, normative orientations, which tend to be stable over time, are instead shown to play a limited role.

One important question remains unanswered: Is this strategic use of new arenas for communicating with citizens enough to aid the needs of a representative democracy beset with decreasing legitimacy and increasing distances between citizens and representatives? Scholars demanding more radical transformations of our democratic system would certainly claim that the tendencies of a communicative relationship between citizens and representatives described in this thesis signify attempts to “cover-up” distances instead of covering them. Hence, these forms of communication would not sufficiently foster a closer and more communicative relationship between citizens and representatives even if such practices were widespread among political representatives. These scholars might argue that the incompatibilities between established logics of representative democracy and more participatory or communicative forms of representation are so great that any real change demands a revolution instead of piecemeal reforms (Blaug, 2002; Coleman 2005a; Coleman, 2005b; Rosanvallon, 2011). In the end, however, only citizens can be the judges.
References


Edelenbos, J., Klok, J-P., & van Tatenhove, J. (2009). The institutional embedding of interactive policy making: Insights from a compara-


Appendix 1: Survey questions

Survey 1a: Survey of ECC participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original English</th>
<th>Response alternatives</th>
<th>Use of question (operationalisation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The members of the MEP panel responded to questions asked by the participants.</td>
<td>1. Fully agree</td>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Fully disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Responsiveness (dummy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3-4=0 (not responsive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1-2=1 (responsive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The members of the MEP panel commented and discussed the recommendations presented by the participants.</td>
<td>1. Fully agree</td>
<td>Commenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Fully disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The members of the MEP panel were in general encouraging about the recommendations.</td>
<td>1. Fully agree</td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Fully disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The members of the MEP panel rather discussed the differences between the various parties represented than discussed the recommendations.</td>
<td>1. Fully agree</td>
<td>Exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Fully disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The members of the MEP panel will act on the recommendations put forward by the participants in the European Parliament.</td>
<td>1. Fully agree</td>
<td>Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Fully disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The members of the MEP panel will report back to the ECC participants in [country] on how they have treated the recommendations in the European Parliament.</td>
<td>1. Fully agree</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Fully disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Fairly much trust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Not so much trust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Absolutely no trust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Survey 1b: Survey of MEPs and candidates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey question</th>
<th>Response alternatives</th>
<th>Use of question (operationalisation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When you think of your participation in the European Citizens' Consultation in your country, how satisfied are you with the following aspects of your experience? a) The relevance of the topics for discussion</td>
<td>1 (Not at all satisfied) – 5 (Very satisfied)</td>
<td>MEPs satisfaction with different aspects of the ECC project a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) The relevance of the citizens recommendations</td>
<td>1 (Not at all satisfied) – 5 (Very satisfied)</td>
<td>MEPs satisfaction with different aspects of the ECC project b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) The feasibility of the proposals formulated by the citizens</td>
<td>1 (Not at all satisfied) – 5 (Very satisfied)</td>
<td>MEPs satisfaction with different aspects of the ECC project c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A number of statements follows below, tell us to what extent you agree with each of these statements. a) “Following my participation in ECC my opinion changed in one or more of the issues discussed”</td>
<td>1 (Fully disagree) – 5 (Fully agree)</td>
<td>MEPs evaluation of the impact of the ECC project a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) “The ECC will have a substantial impact on EU politics”.</td>
<td>1 (Fully disagree) – 5 (Fully agree)</td>
<td>MEPs evaluation of the impact of the ECC project b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) “The ECC is well known by most MEPs”.</td>
<td>1 (Fully disagree) – 5 (Fully agree)</td>
<td>MEPs evaluation of the impact of the ECC project c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Survey 2: Survey of local councillors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey question</th>
<th>Response alternatives</th>
<th>Use of question (operationalisation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which political party do you represent?</td>
<td>Political party (open text field)</td>
<td>Political orientation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Left Party, Social Democrats, &amp; the Green Party=left; the Centre Party, the Liberal Party, the Moderate Party, &amp; the Christian Democrats=right Other=missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Majority/opposition (based on party affiliation and distribution of seats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which local government are you a representative in?</td>
<td>Local government (open text field)</td>
<td>Pioneer (dummy):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x4, x5, x6=0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x1, x2 &amp; x3=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hesitator (dummy):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x1, x2 &amp; x3=0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x4, x5, x6=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you a man or woman?</td>
<td>1. Man</td>
<td>Woman (dummy):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Woman</td>
<td>1=0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What year were you born?</td>
<td>Year of birth 19: (numeric text field)</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your highest level of education?</td>
<td>1. Elementary school/Vocational school/High school</td>
<td>University education (dummy):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Secondary education /Folk high school</td>
<td>1-2=0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. University or college degree</td>
<td>3=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent do you agree with the following</td>
<td>1 (Strongly disagree) – 10 (Strongly agree)</td>
<td>Satisfaction with vertical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>statement? “The communication between elected</td>
<td></td>
<td>communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>representatives and citizens works very well in my municipality”.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### English translation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey question</th>
<th>Response alternatives</th>
<th>Use of question (operationalisation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| How often do you use the following channels to communicate with the citizens in your role as an elected representative? Email, personal blog, personal website, online discussion forum | 1. Often  
2. Sometimes  
3. Seldom  
4. Never | Digital forms of vertical communication (additive index) |
| How often do you use the following channels to communicate with the citizens in your role as an elected representative? Party meetings, mail, phone, site visits, debate articles, letters to the editor | 1. Often  
2. Sometimes  
3. Seldom  
4. Never | Traditional forms of vertical communication (additive index) |
| If, in the preparation of a political issue of principal importance in a political assembly a conflict occurs between an assembly members opinion, the opinion of his or her party group and the opinion of the voters, how do you think that the member should vote? | 1. Vote in accordance with the party groups position  
2. Vote in accordance with the voters position  
3. Vote in accordance with his or her own opinion | Party representative (dummy)  
2-3=0  
1=1  
Delegate (dummy)  
1&3=0  
2=1  
Trustee (dummy)  
1-2=0  
3=1 |
| To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “A member of the city council must always try to foster discussion about important issues with voters to explain their choices and political positions”. | 1 (Strongly disagree) – 10 (Strongly agree) | Accountability |
To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “A member of the city council must foster discussion about important issues with voters in order to be able to make good decisions.”

1 (Strongly disagree) – 10 (Strongly agree)

To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “Citizens should be given opportunities to participate in local politics in the following ways”: a) by engaging in political parties b) discussing various issues in the local community c) advisory referendums on important issues d) advisory citizens’ panels e) citizen-initiatives to the city council f) expressing their opinions in polls g) influencing the local government as service users (user boards)

1 (Strongly disagree) – 10 (Strongly agree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey question</th>
<th>Response alternatives</th>
<th>Use of question (operationalisation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “A member of the city council must foster discussion about important issues with voters in order to be able to make good decisions.”</td>
<td>1 (Strongly disagree) – 10 (Strongly agree)</td>
<td>Inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent do you agree with the following statement? “Citizens should be given opportunities to participate in local politics in the following ways”: a) by engaging in political parties b) discussing various issues in the local community c) advisory referendums on important issues d) advisory citizens’ panels e) citizen-initiatives to the city council f) expressing their opinions in polls g) influencing the local government as service users (user boards)</td>
<td>1 (Strongly disagree) – 10 (Strongly agree)</td>
<td>Attitudes toward: a) Party engagement b) Political discussion c) Referendums d) Opinion polls e) Citizens’ initiatives f) Citizens’ panels g) User boards Political participation (additive index)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Survey 3: Survey of political bloggers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English translation</th>
<th>Response alternatives</th>
<th>Use of question (operationalisation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Survey question</strong></td>
<td><strong>Response alternatives</strong></td>
<td><strong>Use of question (operationalisation)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When where you born?</td>
<td>Year (numeric text field)</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you a man or woman?</td>
<td>Woman, Man</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Which is your highest completed level of education | 1. Elementary school / primary school  
2. Secondary school  
3. Folk high school  
4. University/College  
5. Graduate school | High level of education (dummy): 1-2=0  
3-5=1 |
| What is your place of residence? | City (open text field) | Geographical location: Metropolitan area (dummy)  
Cities in the greater Stockholm area=1  
Other=0 |
| For how long have you blogged? | 1. Less than 3 months  
2. 3-6 months  
3. 6 months to 1 year  
4. 1-2 years  
5. 2-4 years  
6. More than 4 years | Long-time blogger (dummy): 1-3=0  
5-6=1 |
| How often have you written new blog posts during the election campaign? | 1. Several times a day  
2. About once a day  
3. 3-5 times per week  
4. 1-2 times per week  
5. Every other week  
6. Less often | Frequent blogger (dummy) 4-6=0 |
| In the past month, how many hours per week did you spend on the following activities? Your blog | 1. No time at all  
2. 1-5 hours  
3. 5-10 hours  
4. 10-20 hours  
5. More than 20 hours | Blogging time |
| How important was the following motivation for blogging during the election campaign in 2010? To support an individual election campaign. | 1. Very important  
2. Somewhat important  
3. Somewhat unimportant  
4. Not important at all | Strong personal campaign motif/ personal campaigning (dummy) 2-4=0  
1=1 |
### English translation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey question</th>
<th>Response alternatives</th>
<th>Use of question (operationalisation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often have you attended party meetings in the last year?</td>
<td>1. Never&lt;br&gt;2. Once&lt;br&gt;3. Two to nine times&lt;br&gt;4. Ten times or more</td>
<td>Active party member (dummy)&lt;br&gt;1-3=0 4=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you hold any political position or office during the last election term?</td>
<td>1. Member of the national parliament&lt;br&gt;2. Member of the European Parliament&lt;br&gt;3. County council/ regional council&lt;br&gt;4. Local council&lt;br&gt;5. Local committee&lt;br&gt;6. Other position&lt;br&gt;7. No position&lt;br&gt;Other position (specify)</td>
<td>Incumbent (dummy)&lt;br&gt;6-7=0 1-5=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you run for any of the following positions in the 2010 elections?</td>
<td>1. Member of the national parliament&lt;br&gt;2. County council/ regional council&lt;br&gt;3. Local council&lt;br&gt;4. Other position&lt;br&gt;5. No position&lt;br&gt;Other position (specify)</td>
<td>Candidate (dummy)&lt;br&gt;4-5=0 1-3=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological positions are often described along a left-to-right spectrum. Where would you situate yourself along this spectrum?</td>
<td>0 (left), 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (centre), 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 (right)</td>
<td>Ideological position</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

...continued
## English translation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey question</th>
<th>Response alternatives</th>
<th>Use of question (operationalisation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideological positions are often described along a left-to-right spectrum. Where would you situate your party along this spectrum?</td>
<td>0 (left), 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (centre), 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 (right)</td>
<td>Ideologically right of party (dummy): Own position – party's position. ( &lt;1=0 ) ( \geq1=1 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a politically actor, how important is it to be able to act in and through the following media? Social media blogs, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)</td>
<td>1 (Totally unimportant) - 5 (Very important)</td>
<td>Confidence in social media (dummy) ( 1-3=0 ) ( 4-5=1 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is the content of your blog characterised by the following topics?</td>
<td>1 (Not at all) – 5 (To a very great extent)</td>
<td>Local focus National focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Local political topics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) National political topics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you use your blog for the following purposes: a) To inform the voters about and give reasons for my political acting.</td>
<td>1 (Never) – 5 (Very often)</td>
<td>Accountability (dummy) ( 1-3=0 ) ( 4-5=1 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) To inform myself about the voters’ ideas and thoughts.</td>
<td>1 (Never) – 5 (Very often)</td>
<td>Inquiry (dummy) ( 1-3=0 ) ( 4-5=1 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) To foster closeness to the voters, demonstrate that I am accessible, and share their experiences.</td>
<td>1 (Never) – 5 (Very often)</td>
<td>Connectivity (dummy) ( 1-3=0 ) ( 4-5=1 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many political blogs excluding your own, do you read regularly?</td>
<td>1. None 2. 1 to 3 3. 4 to 7 4. 8 to 10 5. More than 10</td>
<td>Heavy blog reader (dummy) ( 1-4=0 ) ( 5=1 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What opportunities do you provide your blog’s readers to contact you? a) Comment field</td>
<td>1. Yes 2. No</td>
<td>Comment field (dummy) ( 1=1 ) ( 2=0 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey question</td>
<td>Response alternatives</td>
<td>Use of question (operationalisation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When it comes to comments that have been posted on your blog, what percentage have you read?</td>
<td>State in % (numeric text field)</td>
<td>Read comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When it comes to comments that have been posted on your blog, what percentage have you answered using the comment field?</td>
<td>State in % (numeric text field)</td>
<td>Answer comments in comment field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When it comes to comments that have been posted on your blog, what percentage have you answered or commented on in a subsequent blog post?</td>
<td>State in % (numeric text field)</td>
<td>Answer comments in blog post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now we want you to judge to what extent your blog has focused upon drawing attention to your political party respective to your self.</td>
<td>1 (The party) – 5 (Myself)</td>
<td>Blog focusing on person (dummy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-3=0</td>
<td>4-5=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In general, what is your position on preferential voting in elections?</td>
<td>1. No preferential voting</td>
<td>Support for stronger system of preferential voting (dummy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Less preferential voting</td>
<td>1-3=0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Just enough preferential voting</td>
<td>4=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. More preferential voting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If, in the preparation of a political issue of principal importance in a political assembly a conflict occurs between an assembly members opinion, the opinion of his or her party group and the opinion of the voters, how do you think that the member should vote?</td>
<td>1. Vote in accordance with the party groups position</td>
<td>Party delegate (dummy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-3=0</td>
<td>1=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1=1</td>
<td>(Citizen) Delegate (dummy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1&amp;3=0</td>
<td>2=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2=1</td>
<td>Trustee (dummy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-2=0</td>
<td>3=1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 2: Descriptive statistics

### Study 1a: Survey of ECC participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust in the European Parliament (T1)</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust in the European Parliament (T2)</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The MEPs:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . . responded to questions asked by the participants</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . . commented and discussed the recommendations presented by the participants</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . . were in general encouraging about the recommendations</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . . rather discussed the differences between the various parties represented than discussed the recommendations</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . . will act on the recommendations put forward by the participants in the European Parliament;</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . . will report back to the ECC participants in [country] on how they have treated the recommendations in the European Parliament.</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Study 1b: Survey of MEPs and candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived impact of the ECC proposals on EU-policy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived knowledge about the ECC process among MEPs</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in opinion on topic</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with the relevance of the topics for discussion</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with the citizens’ proposals in their country</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with the feasibility of the proposals</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Study 2: Survey of local councillors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group (hesitator municipality/pioneer municipality)</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political party</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (woman/man)</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>52.19</td>
<td>12.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education (primary education/secondary education/post-secondary education)</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with the communication between councillors and citizens in the municipality (1=lowest – 10=highest)</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.86</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital communication (frequency of communication with citizens through digital channels)</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.51</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional communication (frequency of communication with citizens through traditional channels)</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10.62</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.91</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.08</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes toward forms of citizen participation: Party engagement</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.26</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political discussion</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.98</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referendums</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen panels</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.24</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens’ initiatives</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.43</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion polls</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.49</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User boards</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.42</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustee role of representation (dummy)</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party representative role of representation (dummy)</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegate role of representation (dummy)</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.26</td>
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</table>
### Study 3: Survey of political bloggers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time blogging</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of blog posts</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of other blogs the respondent read often</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Use of blog for a personal election campaign</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of party meetings in the respondent have participated in during the last year</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>Party affiliation</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>1.76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Member of the political majority (dummy)</td>
<td>391</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inquiry</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Accountability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on local political issues</td>
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<td>3.47</td>
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<td>Focus on national issues</td>
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<td>Confidence in the political importance of social media</td>
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<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.97</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blog features a comment field (dummy)</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage of comments read</td>
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<tr>
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<td>63.14</td>
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<td>Percentage of comments answered in subsequent blog posts</td>
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<td>Blog focus: Party - person</td>
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<td>Party delegate</td>
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<td>28.48</td>
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