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Global Interconnectedness
- Local Authorities and Transnational Networking

Picture Viña del Mar, a Chilean port city and self-proclaimed 'world class city', in part by aspiring to become a 'digital city'; and Bremen, a Northern German city that refers to itself as 'the Science City'. Accomplished transnational networkers, they both frequent a number of the same transnational forums, notably in the field of e-government and e-democracy. Strange bedfellows, strange connections, or everyday forms of political globalization?

This article argues that in their proclaimed efforts at 'modernizing' themselves, public sector organizations, also at the sub-state level, increasingly envision the new media as an object of policy making and intervention. At the same time, this focus on the new media facilitates transborder networking and assumes the shape of 'globalizing webs' connecting the actors internationally through processes of mediation and with implications for relations of authority and modes of governance. Empirically, our account is based on interviews with key municipal officers in Viña and Bremen, on conversations with officials in charge of the two networks, on participant observation at two annual meetings and workshops, as well as on documentary research and studies of other accomplished networkers and networks, all conducted from 2003-2006 (Hansen and Salskov-Iversen 2005 a; b; c; Flyverbom & Hansen 2006; Hansen and Hoff 2006; Salskov-Iversen 2006a; b). Viña and Bremen can hardly claim representativeness – this is beyond the research design. Instead, that which unites them is their proactive – but highly idiosyncratic and contextual – quest for and involvement in transnational networking. Nor do these vignettes lead to comparisons; rather, they serve the dual purposes of eliciting insights into what global interconnectedness may mean and into the invariably local nature of each and every connection.

For public sector organizations, being internationally connected may involve various types and degrees of international engagement in one or several policy areas, ranging from affiliation with or formal membership in different types of networks, participation in best practice, benchmarking and award schemes, study tours abroad, applying for EU project funding, keeping abreast with international developments and professional literature, etc. In this article, however, we are particularly concerned with networking in the field of 'e-modernization'. Interwoven with and echoing notions of rendering the public sector more efficient and responsive, as formulated and disseminated in the OECD modernization discourse (OECD 2005), e-modernization articulates the notion of reforming the public sector by leveraging the new media to meet the challenges of 'globalization' and the multiple demands of the citizenry in the 'information age': e-literacy, e-access, e-business, e-governance and/or e-democracy. E-modernization depends on the expertise and resources of other actors, e.g. consultants and transnational actors, breeding transboundary forums for deliberation, knowledge sharing, advocacy and policy formulation, cutting across traditional demarcations between the local and global, between the public and the private.

The impulse towards this policy convergence does not stem from nation states alone, but also from spatial units, organizational forms and scales other than those provided by the nation state. Substate units such as cities and regional governments can be seen actively contributing to and being part and parcel of the rapidly changing organizational architecture for these cross-border flows (Sassen 2002: 1). The proliferation of transnational city-to-city networks and other platforms involving sub-state actors, often together with private sector actors, are effectively redefining the strategic

outreach of many local communities. The cities referred to in Sassen et al. relate to the 'world cities of the North', such as New York and London, as well as the so-called 'second-tier global cities of the South', such as Sao Paolo and Shanghai. However, in this article we examine how some of these dynamics are being played out in cities on a much smaller scale. The opening-up of national economies also serve as key drivers in our cities, but our focus is on how city governments, even when not hubs in the emerging urban system, attempt to position themselves in this system by proactively latching onto and initiating various types of transnational networks in which the potentialities of the new media stand high on the agenda. In turn, these networks represent the ascendance of transboundary organizational forms that are considered worthy of study in their own right.

The article is divided in two main sections. In the first section we take a more detailed look at the two localities mentioned above, Bremen and Viña del Mar, and two of the networks linking them together. In the second section we draw on literature on organizational innovation, governance and governmentality to discuss the role of e-modernization and its derivatives, e.g. e-innovation, and speculate about the implications of these developments, including the formation of what we term globalizing webs and the central role of mediation for the generation of local and global authority.

Cities in global dialogue[i]
Today, the broad thrust of public sector reform in the world of the OECD and beyond is organized by the overarching concept of Modernization (OECD 2005), a wide but diffuse project aimed at improving public sector performance and rendering government more efficient, open and responsive, much like its forerunner, New Public Management, but less openly ideologically invested. The identification of the need to 'modernize' developed roughly at the same time as the notion of the information society began to gather momentum in the public sector, and the two have increasingly become inseparable. Thus, in Denmark, the first modernization program was introduced in 1983, with IT-based office systems in all government organizations as an important element. In 1998, the Swedish government published a strategy for the modernization of public administration and management, *Central Government*

Administration in the Citizens' Service, which identified ICT as the most important tool for improving public services. Britain introduced a 'modernization program' in 1999 in which the establishment of an 'Information Age Government' constituted one of the key priorities. In Germany, the *Modern State-Modern Administration Program*, also adopted in 1999, was a wide-ranging government modernization program, preceded one month earlier by *The Information Society Action Program Innovation and Jobs in the Information Society of the 21st Century.*

"Bremen has worked to reinvent itself for a decade, and the central plank in its efforts to revive its economy is to re-gear Bremen for the 'knowledge economy'."

In other regions of the world, the last decade has witnessed similar processes fusing public sector modernization ideals with new media and information society visions, for example in Latin America, and specifically in countries such as Brazil, Mexico – an OECD member – Argentina, Peru and Chile. The effects of these modernization discourses are, as Escobar has argued (Escobar 1995: 49), specific "to each locality – its history of immersion in the world economy, colonial heritage, patterns of immersion in the world economy." When translated to the local level, globally dominant discourses tend to follow contextually defined logics, latching onto local dynamics and becoming harnessed for local projects and networks, producing hybrid patterns. We set out to illustrate some of these processes in the vignettes below.

The City of Bremen
The Free Hanseatic City of Bremen, the smallest of the 16 German states constituting the Federal Republic of Germany, consists of the cities of Bremen and Bremerhaven, with app. 545,000 and 119,000 inhabitants, respectively. What used to be a thriving port city with a large manufacturing base is now struggling to reverse thirty years of relentless decline. The collapse of its shipbuilding industry and the drastic reduction in its port-related business has resulted in massive economic and social challenges for Bremen. The current rate of unemployment for ethnic Germans is 29 percent and 44

percent for ethnic minorities, seriously straining the city finances.

Bremen has worked to reinvent itself for a decade, and the central plank in its efforts to revive its economy is to re-gear Bremen for the 'knowledge economy', re-orienting businesses and citizens towards science and high technology and, more generally, instilling a culture of entrepreneurialism and innovation into the citizens of Bremen. To this end, the political leadership has declared Bremen 'the Science City'. One important step in this direction has been to build a technology and science park surrounding the University of Bremen in order to support the R&D efforts of small and medium-sized enterprises, creating an incubator environment and spin-offs from the research conducted at the university.

"Being part of the 'modern world' and attracting investors are believed to be inseparable from the e-modernization of the state."

The City of Bremen has established a reputation as a German – and indeed international – frontrunner in e-government, primarily focusing on digitalized services organized around a public-private partnership. While Bremen's primary reason for embracing e-governance deals with the need to increase productivity and obtain economies, it has also used its e-initiatives as a vehicle for projecting the City nationally and abroad as an integrated part of its efforts to position Bremen as a high-tech city. The City of Bremen's latter-day experience with strategic international networking started in 1996 with the Bangemann Challenge (now referred to as the Stockholm Challenge), which in turn was the prime catalyst in the launch of www.bremen.de. These early initiatives paved the way for Bremen's participation in various bodies and networks, both at the domestic and European levels, and enjoyed international acclaim as evidenced by several e-government prizes and awards.

Importantly, Bremen was one of the founders of the Global Cities Dialogue (GCD) in 1999 and continue to serve as vice-chair. Moreover, Bremen became the coordinator of the URB-AL Network 13 in 2004, not only because it subscribes to the aims of this EU-generated forum (see below), but also on the grounds that it provides a platform for Bremen to develop network lea-

dership capabilities. Bremen and Viña have become connected through these two networks. Before unfolding that story, however, we will travel to the other side of the Atlantic.

The City of Viña del Mar

Viña del Mar sits on the Pacific Coastline 120 km North West of Santiago, the capital of Chile. Not only are Viña and its app. 320,000 inhabitants a world apart from Bremen geographically, the City's journey into the so-called information society has also been completely different and occurred subsequent to that of Bremen. Moreover, Viña was initially less strategically concerned with e-modernization than Bremen, although this has changed recently. Further, the local and national political and economic institutions shaping the City have always been very different. Viña was founded in 1874 as a holiday residence for the elite from Santiago and nearby Valparaíso. Over the years, the city became a tourist magnet, also attracting people searching for work from elsewhere in Chile. Later, as universities were established in the region, it also became a magnet for students. Today, the city has a thriving festival and arts culture, most of which is co-sponsored by the private sector.

After seizing power in the early 1970s, the Pinochet regime divided the country into 13 regions, with municipal and regional authorities vertically linked to the apex of the regime (Eaton 2004). Viña is situated in the Fifth Region. In the 1980s, this region was severely struck by the shift in national economic strategies from a state protectionist regime towards a neo-liberal regime with private actors as the main driver and the closing of state-subsidized industries. The region continues to suffer high unemployment rates (Silva Lira 2005), even though the situation has changed as evidenced by high annual growth rates and the democratically elected centre-left governments since 1990. An important source of the City's income now relates to tourism. The municipality is wealthy by Chilean standards, perhaps the epitome of the rapidly emerging consumer society in Chile. As in the rest of Latin America, however, this standard implies a significant degree of inequality and poverty.

Like Bremen on the other side of the Atlantic, Viña has a long tradition for networking with actors and institutions outside of the city. Viña has recently expanded its participation in a number of e-projects – or what

our interviewees in Viña refer to as 'platforms' – involving partners from abroad, with significant travel activities in combination with digitally based communications amongst key municipal officers. Ongoing and impending projects include the further development of the City's e-governance (see http://www.munivina.cl), and the maintenance of Viña's local historical legacy through the development of a digital archive. Yet another project has been launched by the new mayor, previously a strong Pinochet supporter. This project aims to convert Viña del Mar into a 'World Class City', involving the development of a 'digital city' with the ambition of attracting tourists and students.

These initiatives are not the result of a full-fledged strategy developed by the City authorities, nor have they been prompted by the national government, whose national e-government initiatives began to emerge in the 1990s as part of the democratically elected government's modernization programs for public sector reform. In 1998, a special 'information society commission' was established by the government, whose report was to shape the subsequent development of an e-government agenda, as epitomized by a Directive on Electronic Government in 2001 issued by the President Lagos administration. Chile is currently among the most connected countries in Latin America (Hilbert and Katz 2003; Hilbert 2005). Being part of the 'modern world' and attracting investors are believed to be inseparable from the e-modernization of the state, which includes heightening efficiency in government, in the provision of services, as well as in the creation of markets in which public provision was previously the norm.

Nevertheless, the national government has offered few resources to stimulate international cooperation at the local level, and the inspiration to projects such as the above has come from elsewhere, such as from participation in transnational networks. It is in part through its participation in Global Cities Dialogue (GCD) and the URB-AL program – both of which have Bremen as an important driving force – and the ensuing learning processes that Viña has gained substantial experience from transnational networking in the field of e-modernization.

The shared transnational space
The GCD is a worldwide network of city authorities dedicated to realizing the potential of information and communication technologies for local democracy, efficiency and sustainability. It was created in 1999. It has been formally cut loose from its EU origins. Membership is free of charge but requires a personal commitment from the Mayor or a high-ranking political representative. There are currently more than 170 members.

The URB-AL Network 13 *Towns and the Information Society* – a network organized within the framework of the EU URB-AL program – has a substantial overlap with GCD in terms of members. The URB-AL program was created in 1995 (Godínez Zúñiga and Huerto Romero 2004). Aimed at forging direct links between local authorities in Latin American and Europe, it has provided grants to thematic networks and joint projects in the field of urban local development aimed at facilitating the exchange of experience, identifying shared problems and priorities, developing tools for action, and disseminating best practice.

Since the launch of URB-AL, representatives from more than 750 communities in the EU and Latin America have participated in its activities. The URB-AL budget for joint projects has captured the interest of many actors, and although it is clear that resources are limited and competition sharp, the participation in program activities. The second phase of the program, launched in 2005 and with a budget of 50 million Euros, emphasizes the development of direct and lasting links between towns in both regions. From scrutinizing the list of participants in the 14 decentralized thematic networks around which the program revolves – all of which have specific websites where participants can obtain information regarding the ongoing activities (e.g. http://www2.bremen.de/urb-al/index_ie.html) – it becomes evident that many communities have participated in numerous joint project activities. Joint projects are proposed in annual workshops. Here, potential partners from local authorities from the EU and Latin America meet face-to-face, exchange views, develop ideas and set up teams facilitated by externally recruited moderators with expertise in the field in question.

Throughout this process, there is a significant emphasis on networking, team-building and learning processes, and activities take place on a voluntary basis. Approved projects receive grants from the EU, co-financed with a minimum of 30 percent from the partners, who may also include other actors from the urban env-

ironment, such as local business and NGOs. The URB-AL Network 13 *Towns and the Information Society* held its first annual meeting in parallel with the GCD in 2004 in Miraflores, Peru. Bremen hosted the second annual meeting of the network in November 2005, a meeting at which Viña proposed a project entitled *BlogCulture: Digital catalogue of our cultural heritage*, to be coordinated by Viña, if approved, and which includes partners from both Europe and Latin America. The GCD and URB-AL Network 13 thus share the same vision about 'information society' and the promises it holds for citizens, governments and businesses.

> "The last decade has witnessed a virtual mushrooming of initiatives designed to enable various types of transnational networking in the field of e-modernization."

The last decade has witnessed a virtual mushrooming of initiatives designed to enable various types of transnational networking in the field of e-modernization. These initiatives embrace a multiplicity of actors, both as initiators and participants, including supranational – notably the EU – national and sub-national governments, transnational ICT and consulting companies, and transnational institutions and organizations, such as the UN and the World Bank, as well as new, multi-stakeholder partnerships operating globally (Flyverbom and Hansen, forthcoming). Saliently, the recently concluded UN World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) also reflects this thinking. This UN Summit was the first ever to allow the participation of local authorities, complete with a special series of preparatory meetings and summits focusing entirely on the role of cities and regions, such as the Bilbao World Summit on the Information Society and the Role of Local Authorities, held in November 2005. As one might have expected, a large number of GCD and URB-AL Network 13 members participated in the Bilbao World Summit, including representatives from the cities of Bremen and Viña de Mar.

Public Sector (E)-Modernization, (E)-Innovation and Globalizing Webs

We have seen in the above how e-modernization can become the currency connecting very disparate local aut-

horities for varying periods of time and for very different reasons. This is a currency assembled and orchestrated by transnational networks, providing different yet partially overlapping platforms – online and offline – for networking, exchanging knowledge, learning and joint-project development. The analysis leads towards an unfolding of the concept of globalizing webs and the power dynamics inherent in this type of social mode. To get that far, however, we must engage the stories in the preceding section, reflecting on how our cities' passionate embrace of new media and transnational networking relates to the wider OECD 'modernization' project (OECD 2005) and its emphasis on innovation, as referred to in the above.

In both Bremen and Viña, e-modernization is clearly related to a discourse regarding innovation – how to become a learning government capable of acquiring, creating, transferring, modifying and applying new knowledge – which arguably represents a new phase in the perennial pressures for efficiency and improved performance. Innovation refers not merely to a new idea – an invention – but to a new practice. Moreover, it may include the reinvention and adaptation of a particular practice to another context. The vast and continuously changing ICT field constitutes a veritable goldmine of potential improvement, which is also borne out by the massive increase in both accomplished and expected spending on ICT in the public sector across the globe. In this vein, subscribing to e-modernization has become synonymous with subscribing to e-innovation. To this end, networking is of the essence.

According to the innovation literature, organizations – whether public or private – do not innovate in isolation; rather, they rely on extensive interaction with their environment (Fagerberg 2005, Hartley 2005) to identify and develop new combinations of new and/or existing ideas, capabilities and skills. This reasoning, we find, requires a conceptualization of not only how particular innovations are generated, appropriated and edited in local settings,[2] but also of how they are mediated across organizational, institutional and national boundaries. Transnational networks such as Global Cities Dialogue and URB-AL provide some of the answer. They come in a wide variety of forms, challenging the established notions of what constitutes effective and democratic government. Transnational networks are in-

creasingly regarded as the nuts and bolds of 'network society', just as their rise has significantly contributed to the shift in an analytics grounded in the concept of government to the concept of governance.

In our most recent studies of transnational networks, it has struck us that the organizing practices involved and the very definition of substance and actors are very much shaped by mediation, an issue that is rarely explored in the above-indicated literatures on transnational networks. Mediation in this sense refers to media technologies and in particular digitalization enabling new types of connectivity, modes of organizing, and, not least, new ways of thinking and acting towards issues of public sector concern. Assuming that the basic units of individuals, groups and organizations in any society are linked by networks, then the next logical step is to claim that in any contemporary society, media networks constitute the core infrastructure of such links (van Dijk 2005: 146).

In the field of e-modernization, there is an important sense in which governance

> "(...) has become inseparable from media governance, and information technologies are not only the object of governance, but also the very medium through which governance is realized" (Singh 2002: 13).

To capture the mediated character of the innovation dynamics in networks, we have proposed the concept of 'globalizing webs' (Hansen and Salskov-Iversen 2005b; c). Drawing on Barry (2001: 12), we contend that globalizing webs are not fixed or completed organizational entities, but orderings or arrangements in process in an environment shaped by hypermedia (Deibert 1997). As such, globalizing webs connote transnational connectivity, fluidity, complexity and virtuality. They not only imply that social, political or economic ordering in time and space is invariably created from a complex network of localized, technical practices and devices, but also that these practices and devices render it possible to link or connect calculations and action at one place with calculations and actions in another place in entirely new ways. Such connections rely on processes of translation and association for their realization (Rose and Miller 1992), where translation by definition implies a move-

ment from place to place and thus on some sort of alignment between the nodes. In this way, globalizing webs provide us with a prism for observing how knowledge travels and some of the new technological circumstances enabling the creation of bonds between the different nodes in the webs.

The vignettes in the previous section give us an idea of how the respective political and administrative leadership in Bremen and Viña can be seen to use and mobilize globalizing webs as an integrated part of their efforts at innovating and repositioning their respective communities. However, they tell us nothing about whether (e)-modernization in the two localities has actually been prompted by the knowledge gained from being transnationally networked. Nor are we able to assess whether being well-connected actually leads to new and improved practices. What is quite clear, though, is that the themes of innovation, e-modernization and transnational connectivity are interlaced and largely represented as two sides of the same coin, informing and justifying important policy initiatives aimed at bringing the two cities into the 'knowledge economy'. As we have seen, Bremen and Viña embarked upon e-modernization against very different backgrounds; however, taken together, the two stories invite a number of further comments.

"Globalizing webs challenge conventional distinctions between the inside and outside of the nation-state."

Through their engagement in e-modernization, both authorities draw extensively on knowledge and resources from the outside, contributing to organizational arrangements that establish cross-cutting spaces of interconnectedness – globalizing webs. These webs provide linkages to forces, actors and entities that act beyond the national purview of each of our organizations, enabling them to latch onto international and transnational actors who elicit, share and co-produce knowledge about how best to govern and innovate, notably through e-modernization. The very diversity of the actors enrolled in these arrangements clearly suggests that membership is not conditioned by being concerned about exactly the same issues. What matters is that the challenges and opportunities faced by these actors can be articulated in broadly similar ways.

Unsurprisingly, globalizing webs challenge conventional distinctions between the inside and outside of the nation-state, between the local and the global, and they make up indeterminable organizational forms that do not match conventional distinctions between the public and private (Hansen and Salskov-Iversen 2005a). Globalizing webs thus disrupt and reconfigure the boundedness of states and cultural spheres, which has been central to the modern political imagination (Barry 2001:20). As such, they can be seen as an instance of 'political globalization' on the grounds that they involve the extension of political networks around policy issues of a 'transnational' character (Held and McGrew 2002). Nevertheless, we would argue that it is the relative indeterminacy, incoherence, mobility and alignment, combined with the intensive focus on and use of new information and communication technologies, that make our globalizing webs distinctive from the political networks, knowledge networks, epistemic communities and transnational discourse communities usually associated with political globalizations and referred to in much recent research, including our own (e.g. Stone 2002).

"Our stories suggest that the cities of Bremen and Viña rely not only on their legal and institutional status as state entities, but also on the chain of actors making up their total networks."

In the globalizing webs that we refer to here, innovation, e-modernization and transnational connectivity are interwoven and largely understood as reinforcing one another. The vignettes presented in this chapter do not allow a systematic assessment of the connections between our cities and the transnational networks along broad-narrow and weak-strong dimensions (Granovetter 1973; Powell and Grodal 2005: 61). However, a qualified guess is that they tend to be both broad and weak, are unstable, defy top-down managerial control, and that their effects cannot be easily pinned down. The accessibility of new ideas and skills through the cultivation of broad and weak ties at the transnational level does not in itself translate into innovative practices in the local organization. The appropriation of new ideas and skills may be limited to the upper management tiers, who travel around the world to engage with other professionals or communicate with them over the World Wide Web.

On the other hand, there is evidently also a sense in which ties offered by the globalizing web can be accessed by others than those members of the organization who 'go global' and establish the ties because of the virtual dimension of the web. Everybody can access the World Wide Web and find out whether an organization – e.g. a local authority – is in fact transnationally connected. In this sense, the globalizing web may resemble a 'rhizome' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), which connects any point to any other point, without the specific characteristic of one point being linked to the same characteristic of the other point, much as the 'globalizing reticula' proposed by Kearney (1996: 126).

The discussion has thus far focussed on what networks and new technologies can do for the translation of knowledge from one place to another. It still begs the question of power. Our stories suggest that the cities of Bremen and Viña rely not only on their legal and institutional status as state entities, but also on the chain of actors making up their total networks, including the globalizing webs characterizing the field of e-modernization. When tapping into and using the symbolic resources of the globalizing web, these organizations also recognize other actors – transnational networks, partnerships and other hybrid arrangements – as political, including their understanding of innovation and excellence in the field of e-modernization. However, such actors are being recognized as authorities that are not ultimately predicated on the same legal and constitutional foundation as state institutions. Their authority is very much based on their capacity to set the stage for knowledge exchange, as well as on the recognition, legitimacy and prestige they may have already gained as astute networkers and knowledge brokers, as for instance in the field of e-modernization.

An organizational form such as the Global Cities Dialogue serves as an apposite illustration. It is clearly not in the same league as the OECD or other high-profiled international organizations; however, it belongs to a large and steadily growing category of transnational organizational forms operating in the shadow of or outside of traditional government, fiercely competing for attention and recognition as an authoritative voice in particular fields. Their role is to offer knowledge, and their authority depends on the translation of knowledge for its effects.

The case of the URB-AL programme is somewhat

different: it can be viewed as an essentially European project, designed to roll out a particular world view and a common framework of action, not only in the European space, but also in a transcontinental space, through a regime of mutual agenda setting, policy formulation and learning. Their differences notwithstanding, the two networks and their activities nevertheless illustrate a technique of governance that is widely considered to be on the rise and relies on its ability to attract and co-opt rather than to coerce. The EU institutionalized this technique at the Lisbon Summit in 2000 with the introduction of the Open Method of Coordination.

Concluding remarks

The cities of Bremen, Germany, and Viña del Mar, Chile, offer examples of how very dissimilar cities, in part through their engagement in the same transnational forums, contribute to and in different ways shape the diffuse project of modernizing the public sector by adapting the new media into their organizational infrastructure and strategies. This has happened with only little contribution from their respective national governments. To the extent that traditional state and interstate systems have been involved, it has mostly been by way of providing basic infrastructure, frameworks for the exchange of knowledge and best practices.

The transnational connections and encounters we have described, whether virtual or material, constitute a kind of fluid organizational arrangement in which the participants, while differentiated by space, time and formal boundaries, form a loose and mobile alignment. By referring to such alignments as globalizing webs, we assume that the webs spun between the different localized nodes link calculations and actions in one place with calculations and actions in another place. The authority of networks such as Global Cities Dialogue and URB-AL depends on their capacity to successfully enroll and mobilize others in the pursuit of their goals. This, in turn, requires translation processes allying the objectives of the two networks with the projects of other actors, including those of Bremen and Viña. Effectively enrolling others in one's project is essential for the construction of authority and when acting at a distance. For those who sign up, the gain may not only be knowledge and contacts, but also identity and reputation – which suggests that being projected and connected across national boundaries is increasingly also valued by sub-national government institutions, as it allows them to reassert their authority, not least locally.

Our point here is not to imply that the accumulation of wealth (business), the control over territories and the physical means of violence (the state) or the existence of delegated power (ministers, judges) are irrelevant for the construction of authority. Rather, our goal is twofold: to substantiate claims about the significance of globalizing webs for the creation of spaces of authority and modes of governance across organizational and territorial boundaries with a specific focus on how the increasing attention to and use of new media impact relations of authority; as well as to show how mundane collaborative activities such as the ones depicted in this article are part and parcel of a relatively unnoticed form of everyday political globalization.

NOTES

[2] In the following, we draw on our accounts of 'globalizing webs' in Hansen and Salskov-Iversen 2005b; c.

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Online Citizens
- Does the Net Add Something New to the Local Public and Local Politics?

To what extent does online political communication add something more and something new to the local public and local politics? On the basis of case studies from three Danish municipalities, some of the skeptical views regarding ICT-mediated forms of political information and deliberation are confirmed. However, it is also shown that the introduction of ICT add both something more and something new to the political public and political decision-making.

Contrary to previous discussions between 'utopians' and 'dysutopians', discussions concerning the democratic potentials of the Internet have recently assumed a more pragmatic position. On the one hand, it is widely recognized that the Net includes certain interactive potentials that are also relevant for democratic decision-making and implementation on various levels. On the other hand, these potentials should not be exaggerated. As some of the skeptics have indicated, politics appear to be proceeding as usual; whether for better or for worse. Few are engaged in political online discussions and those who are resemble those who are active *off-line*, namely the well-educated, middle-aged men, who are already most attentive to the traditional news media. What is added to the political public, the skeptics say, is therefore at best something more, not something else or something new. Furthermore, many online publics are seen to be isolated from conventional offline political publics and are therefore only perceived as being marginally relevant for policy-making and public opinion-formation. It is occasionally also stated that online discussions are more uncivilized than discussions in the traditional media; participants do not listen to and respond to one another.

Are these observations confirmed when confronted with experiences from e-participation in the local Danish context? This is discussed in the following. The first section outlines what is meant by a political public and how the Net can support the communication of individuals and authorities within their environment. The next sections include a brief presentation of the data-material originating from three case municipalities in Denmark and the e-tools used to enhance participation. The analysis in the three following sections concentrates on the question of whether and how the use of these tools by the citizens adds partly something more, partly something new to the local political public, and to what extent it is possible to trace any effect of online deliberation on local public opinion-formation and decision-making.

The Internet as a political public

In relation to democracy, the Internet can be regarded as a particular structure of communication that, like other media, supports individuals communicating with their environment. McNair (2003) has indicated five democratic functions of the media: 1) to *inform* citizens of what is happening around them; 2) to *educate* as regards the meaning and significance of the facts; 3) to provide a platform for *public, political discourse*; 4) to provide *publicity* for governmental and political institutions; and 5) to serve as a channel for the *advocacy* of political viewpoints. The basis of these five functions is a notion of the free formation of will and opinion applying equally to all citizens and which is supported by a public sphere based on two major principles: a principle of *transparency* including free access to information and a principle of *public deliberation*. While the former principle is present in all modern theories of democracy,