



Political Culture in Transition

A Case Study of Young People Confronting Civic Education in
the Net and Beyond

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Introduction

In many Western liberal democracies, voting turnouts have been declining, and democracy has even been described as being in crisis. This has propagated interest in rethinking and reforming democratic institutions, as well as different forms of democratic participation both ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’. Especially young people, the plenipotentiary citizens, have been in the scope of planning the ways to inspire citizens to become more active participants of the society (e.g. Craig 2003). Children’s societal participation has been put on the agenda, dating back to the publication of the UN convention on the rights of children in 1989 (Prout 2003, 11–12). Activating children and young people is important on its own, but it has also been understood as medicating the illegitimacy on the current administrative structure posed by low voting turnout, especially among young adults (e.g. Paakkunainen 2005a; Pekonen 1996; Roberts 2003).

These developments have been common to Western liberal democracies, but the ways how these ideas have been interpreted and transformed, while entering the Finnish territory, are culturally specific. One of the largest projects in Finland addressing the issues of youth participation has been an Internet based web portal called Initiative Channel (INCH)¹. In this study I am going to focus on the formation of political culture around INCH from the perspective of the ability of the service to answer the problems of legitimacy of prevailing political order and from the perspective of young people’s right to be heard. *Political culture* is constituted by conceptions, values, attitudes and ideals toward political organising of differences. INCH works as a nodal point of social practices central for Finnish political culture and youth participation. By restricting to the case of INCH it is possible to get an approachable view point on different issues situated at the very core of Finnish political culture.

The emphasis put on the political system instead of the political culture is a peculiarity of Finnish democratic discourses (Saukkonen 2003, 14–15). By approaching politics from the perspective of political culture I am interested in the reproduction and renewal of political culture in INCH and in the society as a whole. Many aspects of INCH can be related to long term traditions peculiar to Finnish political culture, but that are articulated in the process of production of values through different modalities characterising political action.

In many studies concerning young people’s political engagement, democratic values are assumed to be rather distinct from the structural means of political engagement (e.g. Print 2007; Niemi & Finkell 2006; Torney-Purta 2001), and the problem of youth engagement has been seen narrowly as informational education of certain skills and extrinsic values. These studies don’t take into account the underlying processes affecting young people’s political articulation. Rather they consider young people from point of view of educating them to act under the prevailing political system. Because young people are less willing to participate under the current representative political system, the crisis should be seen as a sign of transformation of democratic values, instead

¹ <http://www.aloitkanava.fi>

of seeing the values as static entities. These values are inseparable from the structural aspects of politics and the political environment, which is why the current trends of political engagement become more understandable in light of socio-semiotic approach. INCH works as a laboratory, and my suggestion is that the method could be applied in other contexts too, helping to understand more general aspects of political engagement.

Initiative Channel

INCH is a web portal for young and young minded people, in which each one of the currently 55 participating municipalities has its own site called a channel. By registering to a channel, one can express ideas that go through a process of several phases moderated by youth workers of the municipality. Depending on the idea's success in the commenting and voting phases, the idea is possibly sent by moderators to people responsible for considering the initiative, such as school or some municipal administrative unit. Also the municipality can use the channel for hearing young people about certain issues the municipality is dealing with, but due to its inactivity, its consideration is mainly left out in this study.

In early 2007, INCH was created by small company Ponsi Interactive Ltd. and its concept was designed by two 27-year old founders of the company, in order to make a tool for municipalities to answer to the demand of hearing young people set by the new Youth Act (72/2006). The company describes itself as "specified in the development of eDemocracy and communication technologies for organizations performing web-applications directed toward brainstorming, inventions, initiative creation, and decision-making for the needs of public and private sector"².

The marketing of INCH was in the beginning done by the people in Ponsi Interactive Ltd. The Ministry of Education started to support the development of the portal and simultaneously the project transformed to a governmental one. Ponsi Interactive Ltd is not responsible for deciding about the future development of INCH, although it can affect the development by making proposals. INCH represents both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' perspectives as it was created by two young people but did transform to a governmental project.

In the basic process of INCH young people can express own ideas and support others' ideas by commenting and voting for or against them. First a new idea is commented by other young people who are registered in the municipality's channel. After that a moderator (youth worker) transforms the idea into an initiative, which is based on the original idea and other people's comments. However, if the idea is inappropriate³ based on some norms I am going to deal with later on, the moderator can interrupt commenting and further action on the idea. Unless the idea is 'inappropriate', it can then be voted for or against by the registered users of the channel and it can be also

² <http://www.ponsi.fi>

³ The inappropriate content occurring in INCH is interesting concept as such, and I will shortly consider what kind of ideas and thoughts are interpreted as inappropriate in the chapter I consider the moderators perspective and how it affects on the democratic and civic educational aspects of INCH. In this chapter I will mainly consider the structural elements build in order to prevent inappropriate content from appearing in INCH.

supported by electric signatures of the supporters. If an idea gets more positive than negative votes moderators send the idea to the people responsible for considering the initiative, such as school or some municipal administrative unit. The users can follow the initiative's success in the following phase.

The interesting qualities of INCH, as a space directing social action, arise from the structure of its processes and channels. Each participating municipality possesses their own channel, and only people registered in that channel are able to comment and express ideas in that specific channel. This limits possibilities of more extensive discussion and deliberation to the municipal level.

In the commenting phase users are able to comment only one comment per idea. The argument for this restriction is that young people should learn to express themselves clearly, which arises from ancient democratic ideals. From deliberative perspective this is of course a problem as the ideas are not readymade, but develop through communicative deliberation bringing forth new ideas to all members. This restriction is formulated to further restrict inappropriate content. This is a good example, how fear of inappropriate content leads to controlling new media, is in contradiction with the democratic ideals of open deliberation⁴. It seems that people were given an open possibility to express themselves, but only as long as they express them in relation to the current conformist norms, and they are not trusted to make their own judgments. The choice to restrict action contains the value that prohibition of inappropriate content is more valuable than further deliberation, which implies that no discussion is preferred over wrong type of discussion.

The second corner stone of the structure of INCH is the voting phase. Young people can vote for the idea that has already gone through the commenting phase and been moderated to an initiative by a moderator. If more positive votes are given than negative ones, the initiative is sent further to people responsible for processing it. Structurally voting phase can only block an idea from succeeding. If an idea doesn't receive more positive than negative votes, it is not processed further. If an idea gets more positive than negative votes, its success is not structurally guaranteed. To support ideas there are no such structural constraints as there is to filter them. Because INCH is based on municipal initiatives that don't have to be supported by large amount people, the voting doesn't structurally empower the initiatives, although it can structurally block them.

In fact, the link between INCH and the institutional system of the municipality is quite narrow. Instead of administratively empowering young people with any new regulative rights, it is based on a conventional right for inhabitants of municipalities to make initiatives. A new thing that INCH entails is that it supports young people to compose initiatives providing help from municipal youth workers. Furthermore INCH brings young people together, although youth workers control the appropriateness of their communication. INCH can provide support to initiatives of a large amount of young people, but on the other hand INCH works as a filter, since an idea that

⁴ The fear of inappropriate content has come forth in discussions with developers and other people behind the development of INCH, although these discussions are not going to be considered as research data in this study.

could have been sent to the municipality or other institution as an initiative, might not be sent anywhere unless it collects support of most young people deciding to vote about the idea. Especially from the perspective of the UN study, the feedback mechanism showing citizens that the views of young people in INCH are taken seriously doesn't function effectively.

New users have to register to INCH with a valid e-mail, to be able to express ideas and engage in commenting and voting. Any other user control mechanisms, such as auditing their personal data, are not imposed. Some suggestions have been made claiming it would be easier for young people to express themselves without the requisite to register. Registration is required even if users publish their ideas or comments anonymously, so that their account name or real name doesn't appear publicly.

Study Question: Formation of Political Culture in Initiative Channel

The problems of seeing values, means and the environment as separable aspects in explaining action have been considered in discourse theory and social semiotics. To study what kind of goals the Government on one hand, and young people on the other, are possessing in regard to INCH and how well INCH answers to these requests, would be inadequate from socio-semiotic perspective. The values and means shouldn't be seen as separate entities because otherwise the way different actors are constructed would remain hidden. Evaluating INCH in this manner would presuppose some democracy theoretical conceptualisation, which would fix the values and lose the sight of how values are created and modified in INCH. When young people and the governmental institutions face each other in INCH, it creates socially meaningful interaction that transforms, disregards, and creates new values in a semiotic process. Given that INCH is built also with some civic educational goals, the ways it transforms political culture through value production is sociologically more interesting than evaluating the system from the point of view of any existing value system. Therefore my primary research question is: How is political culture reproduced and renewed in INCH? In other words, how INCH directs value creation in the interaction between different groups of people dealing with INCH? Based on these questions, I am further interested in how political interests and their articulations could be understood in the context of, and beyond INCH.

The concept of democracy always presupposes some cultural context and value system. Finnish democracy is based on certain universality and conformity principles, and tense social control typical to Nordic countries, but has its own peculiarities such as strong honouring of obedience and law (Stenius 1987; 1997). By conformity it is emphasized that people have to be and act similarly to be socially accepted, whilst the universality refers to universal inclusion of all Finnish people satisfying the conformity requirements. It is interesting to see whether these qualities are constitutive to the Finnish conception of democracy today.

There is a long tradition of certain civic education in Finland, in which young people are having a special role (Satka 2005). INCH is an interesting phenomenon not only from the perspective of

democracy but also that of civic education, which has historically been strongly related to Finnish nation building project. It turns out that INCH is not purely a channel for young people to affect things in society, but there are educational ambitions as well. However, despite the possibility of its reproductive aspects, many critical pedagogists have pointed out that education is not restricted to reproducing powers, but it can also possess genuinely renewing aspects changing the underlying political relations making it possible for INCH to engage young people from more radical democratic perspective. Semiotic processes, where political culture is reproduced, are present in using of INCH as well as in educational situations. This helps us to understand in what way democracy is contingent in Finnish society and suggest similar analytical methods for the semiotic analysis of democracy in other contexts as well.

Actors Connected to Initiative Channel

There are different groups of people related to INCH that could be considered in texts describing how INCH has been historically originated. Because I use socio-semiotic approach in this study, I am interested in how different actors are constructed rather than in their historical existence. However, I am now going to shortly describe the ‘historical’ actors behind INCH to give the reader an idea of its development. I have collected data from three (the Government, moderators, and young people) of the following five actor groups I am going to describe in this section.

Most users of INCH are teenagers who have heard about it in schools or from municipal youth workers. Each participating municipality delegates one or few of its youth workers, called moderators, to moderate the service. They are people working in different instances depending on the municipality. Some of the moderators work directly ‘in the field’ for example by hosting free-time hanging out places for young people in that municipality, while other moderators work in information and counselling services meeting young people less regularly. A third group acting within INCH is formed by the developers of the portal. I have also been working among the developers of INCH as a programmer, which is how my sociological interest in the service grew up in the first place.

National Coordination and Development Centre of Youth Information and Counselling Services⁵ (YICS) are responsible for coordinating information and a counselling network currently in 207 municipalities. They are responsible for coordinating further development of INCH, for recruiting new municipalities, and for training new moderators. The YICS⁶ leads us to the fourth actor group, which is basically the Government and consists of actors representing the state in the service. Since the passing of the new Youth Act (2006/72) and the start of The Finnish Government's Child and Youth Policy Programme 2007–2011⁷, the Ministry of Education became interested in supporting the development of the service. By financial support and coordination the

5 <http://www.nettinappi.fi/kansallinenkoordinointi/coordination.html>, accessed 6.8.2009.

6 National Coordination and Development Centre of Youth Information and Counselling Services will be referred to YICS later on in this study.

7 <http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2008/liitteet/opm21.pdf?lang=en>, accessed 25.03.2009

Ministry of Education and YICS form the governmental actor group, which is important for the formation of INCH. I am going to analyse this group's aims and ambitions mainly by analysing the Youth Policy Programme⁸.

Finally, municipal administration or any organisation responsible for handling an initiative could be seen as an actor of INCH. I have not collected any data from this group, but it will be considered in descriptions made by other actors I gathered data from.

INCH could be reflected as a network or a social phenomenon or a network, with multiple actors in different positions of the society that constitute structural conditions for the other actor groups, and where the values constituting the structures are constantly remade in socio-semiotic processes. Because considering all relations between these actors would be impossible in the scope of this study, I will restrict to data collected from three of the actor groups, and consider what entities are narrated as actors and with what features in different parts of the data.

On the Structure of the Study

In the first chapter I will discuss different background discourses concerning democracy, young people's participation and the role of the Internet in regard to them. First, I will discuss democracy theories in general. Then I am going to consider the peculiarities of Finnish political culture. Furthermore, I will discuss the possibilities of political participation on the Internet and what cultural specificities in Finnish 'knowledge society' are associated to the field. Finally, I will discuss both international and Finnish accounts on young people's societal participation and overview Finnish history of youth work and civic education.

The second chapter is devoted to the theorico-methodological approach I am using in this study. Some general sociological accounts on the relation of actors and structure are going to be discussed first followed by an overview of discourse theory, which is the basic framework for approaches I am using in this study. I am going to introduce elementary concepts related to socio-semiotic approach, namely Greimas' actantial model and modalities of action. With a pragmatic and socio-semiotic oriented approach I am discussing concepts concerning action and politics and connecting socio-semiotic approach with Laclau's and Mouffe's semiotics, which works as a general framework organizing the overall picture socio-semiotic approach yields, and which is used for analyzing the power relations behind different actors.

In the third chapter I will describe the data collected from different people and from the INCH's database. The different parts of data are going to be described in different sections in the same order as they are going to be analyzed in later chapters. I will describe the methods how I collected and treated the data, and discuss some ethical and scientific issues of data collection and interpretation processes in general.

⁸ The Finnish Government's Child and Youth Policy Programme 2007–2011 will be referred to as Youth Policy Program later on in this study.

The fourth chapter begins the actual analysis of INCH. I will analyze the user data collected from INCH's database. Then I will discuss how the structure of INCH works as a text structuring its use and support my argument by categorising the ideas into three categories. I will further discuss the structure of INCH and how it directs action and how different people understand the meaning of the service. Finally I will discuss the possibilities how INCH could be enhanced as an application, and what is its current status in municipal democracy.

In the fifth chapter I discuss the Youth Policy Program and how it was created. Then I analyze its content thematically in order to draw a picture of how the Government expects young people to participate. I will further analyze how the document is written and what kind of implications they have in order to understand the governmental values behind young people's participation. This chapter draws the basic socio-semiotic model to which moderators and young people's narrations are going to be related to in later chapters. Finally, I will discuss about the problematic nature of the concepts of hearing and participation of young people. In this chapter I will consider the ambitions and aims of governmental actors, best presented in the Youth Policy Program. It works as the guide line for different youth policies, and illustrates the structural conditions the Government imposes over young people. It concerns, what is the level of young people's own subjectivity, how much space they should have for their own thinking, and how they should be educated and how their action should be enforced.

The sixth chapter concentrates on analyzing the moderators' perspectives on Initiative Channel. First I will analyze moderators' conceptions of how INCH should be marketed to young people, and how young people have started to use the service from moderators' point of view. Then I will consider how moderators experience their role as helpers of young people in using INCH for the purpose moderators see appropriate. I will then discuss how moderators speak about INCH and young people's participation in order to understand the value moderators give to INCH and participation. Finally, I will show how problematic nature of the concepts of hearing and participation based on moderators descriptions. Moderators have an important role especially in the civic educational aspects of INCH, because they travel around and meet young people marketing INCH and telling them what they could use it for. I analyse moderators amidst the 'top-down' aspects related to bringing up good citizens and the 'bottom-up' aspects related to serving and helping young people to gain their own subjectivity

In the seventh chapter I will give the voice to young people using or trying to use INCH. I will consider their opinions on INCH and political participation. Then I will discuss what kinds of ideas young people consider important and interesting. After this I discuss how young people judge appropriate ideas and how they see their own position in relation to other young people, INCH, and politics in general. Then I will show how young people can be categorized based on their conceptions and how some young people remain indifferent to the governmental narration discussed in the fifth chapter, whilst other young people reproduce it and find it important. Therefore, I can show what the overall value of INCH to different young people is. Finally, I will

discuss the oppositions occurring among different groups of young people and the democratic problems the division possesses. This discussion will also be related to the ways in which INCH is marketed to young people and to the civic education associated to it.

In the eighth chapter I will draw together conclusions of the analysis. First, I will overview the important results from each of these chapters. Then I will discuss the political culture in general, and how it is associated to INCH. Finally I will suggest how INCH could be enhanced not only by changing the application but by a more critical approach in civic education associated to INCH.

The ninth chapter consists of different discussions on the value and meaning of INCH, youth participation and participation on the Internet in general. I will discuss general problems of these fields in comparison with the results shown in my analysis. My aim in that chapter is to open the discussion beyond academic world and discuss the societal implications my study has.

Why Study Initiative Channel?

There are a several reasons for choosing INCH as a research laboratory of the socio-semiotic production of political culture. First, INCH is one of the newest channels for inspiring young people to participate in Finnish society on a more or less political level. Better than studying student bodies or youth councils that emerged earlier, INCH represents a governmental solution for the problems of democracy up to date.

Second, the technology based means of dealing with social, economic, and political goals of Finnish society have become central to Finnish society and the state has started identifying the society with the concept of knowledge society (Hearn 2004, 203–208). Therefore, it is not an accident that this is at the same time a study of an Internet based participation channel. However, techno enthusiasm should never go without reflection. It is still the real people behind INCH, who constitute it although it has its website.

Third, there already is some research on civic education mediated through other mediums, such as student bodies or more representative mediums (e.g. Haikkola 2005; Aapola 2006; Martikainen & Pekonen 1996). On the other hand, there is a lot of discussion on the Finnish political culture among young people, but the field is so large that it is not possible to say everything in any reasonable amount of paper. Therefore, INCH offers us a small laboratory, where I can address important questions about young people's democratic subjectivities from one point of view, and get some overall picture of the whole field. Many of the examples analysed before do not bring the Government and young people so close to each other. Furthermore, no research concerning INCH for example is made after passing the new Youth Act (72/2006), except for a master's thesis, which concerns hearing young people from a juridical perspective (Vainila 2008).

Finally, as a researcher I am really the subject of my study, and I am telling everything from my possibly educated but subjective point of view. The importance of sociological reflection has been pointed out in different texts concerning both ethical but also emancipator issues of scien-

tific research, such as Pierre Bourdieu's (2004, 85–93) suggestion about a socio-analytical method for taking the researcher properly into account, while doing social research. A lot of the research concerning youth engagement is done by people, who have already passed their youth and derive their conceptions from their own youth.

I have both been working as a technical developer of INCH and I am a 24-year old student. I am sincerely interested in the problems I have confronted while working with INCH and I think my position gives something unique for this study. In fact, I have been dealing with INCH for quite some time, I know lot of people behind it, and I am both sociologically and personally interested in its pros and cons. I have had the change of living life outside the borders of Finland, which has helped me in understanding what being Finnish means especially from perspective of a person in my age, whose life-course is not limited to the borders of one nation state, which used to be the normal course for the previous Finnish generations. I have therefore been able to taste life that is described with such concepts as 'global' or 'international', from the point of view of a Finnish young citizen. My theoretical emphasis reflects my subjective position although, I believe that considering same issues with a similar conceptual framework would produce a rather similar results as the ones I express in this study.

PART I

Study Background

1 Background: Democracy, Internet, and Youth in Finland

In this chapter I am going to consider the background discourses that can be related to political aspects of Initiative Channel. I will first consider discussion about democracy and politics in general. I will consider the problematic nature of the concept of democracy and how it should be seen as a societal rather than a theoretical concept (cf. Alapuro 2004, 60). It reflects the political atmosphere and culture of society. After this I will define the concept of political culture and relate it to Finnish society. I will give a short overview of theoretical discussions concerning participation on the Internet and relate it to the Finnish knowledge society project that has motivated the creation of INCH. Finally, because INCH is about young people's political activation, I will overview some scholarly discussions on youth participation and relate them to the Finnish traditions of civic education that have given a special role to young people. Furthermore, I will problematise the possibilities of evaluating civic projects such as INCH.

1.1 From Representation to Deliberation and Counteraction

In this section I present different democracy theories and the ways in which democratic problems have been interpreted. My aim is to be able to give a new point of view to these problems based on my analysis. Therefore I think these rather theoretical discussions might help the reader in following the interpretation of INCH from the perspective of democracy theories.

Democracy has been a debated concept in discussions about the healthiness of different societies as long as modern societies have existed. Democracy can be seen from an administrative perspective as a decision making structure, from a political point of view as a right of participating in decision making, and from a sociological point of view as uniting and making societies possible. Democracy seems to be in crisis as voting turnout has been declining across almost all Western societies in last few decades. This is a problem, if democracy is seen mainly as a legitimate and static decision making structure based on voting activity. However, from a more sociological point of view, democracy could be seen as emerging in some new forms of active participation 'bottom-up' (e.g. Rosanvallon 2008).

There is no adequate definition for democracy. It is rather a battle field that continuously questions its own conditions. In any given particular manifestation of democracy, 'democracy' refers

to a certain more or less open political culture with not only administrative structures but with an underlying discourse of what is democratic and what are the right ways of political action. It is not only a question about who can decide, but also about who can speak and who is able to define the values constituting political culture.

Different democracy theories have either a positive view point and consider, what democratic administrative and participation structures there exist, or a normative⁹ view point and consider, what the best arrangements for such participation are (Setälä 2003, 9–11). While early normative theories emphasized the role of representation and structural arrangements, more contemporary ones have been stressing out the need of open deliberation (e.g. Habermas 1994) and also surveillance exercised by the ordinary citizens (e.g. Rosanvallon 2008, 43–50). These theories have been critical towards the liberal democratic theories that overemphasize the role of parliamentary representation.

More recent democracy theories based on the concept of *deliberation* understand the importance of language and communication as constitutional forms to the social world, and thus their importance to democratic procedures. Deliberation refers to establishing a neutral zone, which makes rational or otherwise more equal dialogue possible. Hegemony is not possessed by people, who are able to vote or exercise direct control, but defines, who is able to define proper ways of articulating interests (e.g. Laclau 2001). Jürgen Habermas (1994) has suggested the need to constitute a public sphere free of hegemony by enabling rational dialogue, in which everybody could equally take part in the articulation of interest. Being less optimistic for the possibility of people's rationality, Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek (2000) use more psycho-analytically based approach, and see the core of democracy lying in the struggle any hegemony poses for the possibility of equal articulation of interests. According to them, proper¹⁰ political interests inherent to every hegemonic regime are in some particular context advocating some particular groups of people, instead of being equal to all.

On one hand, it has been suggested that there really isn't any 'crisis', but that the lack of interest in institutional democracy can be explained by the concept of *stealth democracy* (Bengtsson & Mattila 2009, 304, 307). Instead of explaining disinterest by dissatisfaction, education, or strengthening of post-material values, it is claimed that people require stealth democracy instead of direct democracy and that they are not interested in taking part in political decision-making or details continuously.

On the other hand, it is suggested that it is indeed the representative model that people are not trusting anymore and more actionist, citizen based ways of participation called *counter democ-*

⁹ Normative democracy theories are typically divided into two categories based on whether they emphasize the consequences or the procedures of decision-making processes. The first type of theories see the value of democracy in organising processes of decision-making that produce good decisions as a machine, whereas the procedural theories stress out both the moral value of making the decisions using a proper procedure and the social value of integrating people with the society by making them part of the democratic procedures. (Setälä 2003, 12–15.)

¹⁰ Proper articulation of interest could be related to the demand of 'appropriateness' in INCH.

racy have been suggested (Rosanvallon 2008). According to Rosanvallon (2008, 34–35), democratic engagement can be divided into three different types. I will later use this typology for example in categorizing ideas occurring in INCH. The first type refers to interfering with some specific issues. This type of engagement has some goals and the action is based on maximally achieving these goals. This type is closest to what has traditionally been considered as political action, while politics is seen as a sort of game with goal attaining participants or players. Another type of engagement is democracy of expression based on expressing collective or shared feelings and evaluation of the decision makers. A third type of engagement is participation that consists of collecting citizens together creating social relations between the citizens.

One of my aims in this research, is to be able to interpret the underlying problems of political participation in INCH in a way, which would help to approach the ‘crisis’ of democracy from a new perspective. In the Finnish framework of political science there are two articulations of the crisis of democracy, but they both concentrate on macro level political phenomena such as party politics. The first one is expressed by Kyösti Pekonen (2003, 49–51) stating that political parties have become election parties losing their resonance to the civil society. Another, more naïve interpretation claims that democratic and political engagement has alienated from the people. As Pekonen (2003, 54–56) claims, in the current crisis the real governing and rule is possessed by the Government, whilst the civil society is given only a change of participating in ‘small politics’ that cannot really change the infrastructures of the public administration and the political system. My study of INCH is a micro level analysis and its results can be generalised in such a way that it becomes possible to understand how political culture is connected to problems of democracy.

1.2 Political Culture in Finland

In many democracy theories, as well as in theories of political action, politics is mainly seen as a *political system*, a structure directing decision-making processes (e.g. Easton 1965). This has dominated particularly Finnish political discourses (Saukkonen 2003, 14–15). Politics is about political organisation of differences, and it can be seen of consisting of four different fields: the state institutions, political powers of civil society, identities (such as nation-state identity), and the underlying political culture. In this study, I am mainly interested in the reproduction and renewal of *political culture*, which consists of data, beliefs, feelings and values, attitudes and ideals concerning political organisation of differences. Both identities and political forces contained in civil society reflect political culture, the former representing the feelings, values, and attitudes on the systemic, collective, and individual levels, and the latter representing hopes, expectations, and requirements, that are contrasted with the systemic level. (ibid., 10.)

Instead of defining the concept of political culture very precisely, it is used to denote something socially meaningful and valuable ‘cultural’ background presupposed by a certain political process. In the case of INCH I am trying to understand what political culture is about in a certain context rather than applying any abstract concept of political culture and reflecting what it tells about INCH. In the process of finding meaning and value of INCH socio-semiotic approach is

going to be used, while an approach arising from articulation theory helps to link social phenomena into political and power struggles. Therefore I am particularly interested in different people's values and attitudes regarding the service in relation to their considerations of politics.

Historically there has been a geopolitical division between two different normative regimes of democracy, namely the Hegelian tradition based on the unity of people and its counterpart, anglo-saxon liberal democratic model based on the articulation of private interests. On this axis, the Finnish political culture is leaning towards the Hegelian tradition (Sassi 2000, 35–37). A reference to the benefit of the nation as a whole works as a justification category much better than expressing one's own interest without making the association with the nation as a whole.¹¹

In Finland, politics was until the 19th century exercised mainly in Swedish (Hyvärinen & Kurunmäki & Palonen & Pulkkinen & Stenius 2003, 14–15). After Finnish became a notable language in Finnish politics, it was easy to control political publications because of the small size of the language area. The Finnish language was not very developed for political debate, and political concepts were formulated into Finnish language with certain, rather Hegelian political ambitions in the 19th century. Political culture in Finland lacked the concept of opposition, which made horizontal communication less dominant. It was rather late that the freedom of associations was established in Finland. As in all Nordic countries, the role of social control was rather high in Finland (Stenius 1997, 166–167).

These particularities of Finnish political culture are compatible with the strong Fennomanian nation building movement in the late 19th century. The Hegelian idea of the unity of people as a basis for the state and politics for which for example Snellman's thinking was based on, was an important device used in the nation building project. The nation as a container and supporter of universal rights but also the authenticity of Finnishness are still visible consequences of the Fennomanian nation building movement.

Finnish democracy is rather legalistic in nature (Temmes 2003, 195). Right ways of action are defined by law, and mainly controlled by the Government. The role of ordinary citizens is mainly represented by voting under the representative system and in participating in associational activity, that is yet controlled by laws, such as that every association to be founded has to have its rules approved by the government.

According to Stenius (2008, 43–46), strong obedience, lack of opposition and marginal of horizontal communication are all typical features of Finnish political culture. Therefore it is not surprising that the so called democratic political culture in Finland is based on strong trust in

¹¹ However, compared to another politically Hegelian regime, Germany, Finland was quite small cultural and language area both related to the population size and cultural variation. The German speaking area was politically divided to smaller units that were reasonably independent and if a book for example was banned in some area, probably other areas were able to publish it making different ideas and political ambitions circulate around the German speaking world.

authoritatively and even legally structured ways of political action and participation. Democracy is considered as a decision-making system based on representative parliament's surveillance on the civil servants, and on the role of associations that are judicially official in the legal sense rather than seeing it as a social phenomenon.

In general, the Finnish state has been closely associated with the Finnish nation and civil society. The concept of politics was first referred to as 'stately activity'. Rättälä (2001, 198) also points out that in Finland as well as in other Nordic countries, public political activity has always been regulated by an unwritten norm that political participation presupposes some particular delegated empowerment. Therefore individual inhabitants of municipalities not supported by any background groups', associations', or organizations' official mandate, have no legitimacy in participating in dealing with 'common issues' and publicly debating about them.

The legalistic political culture based on obedience can be understood as a culture, where narrations emphasise such modalities as having-to, prohibitions and allowances. The society as a subject is not represented by narrations of people's own self-originating action, but it is rather a subject of 'true nation', which manifests itself in human action as an outsider. In other words, the nation is seen as something existing 'above' normal course of life, and not seen as something made by people together. The truth of nation gives the meaning and 'authenticity' to the rules of the system that people have to obey but what people also honour (Stenius 1997, 170). In the seventh chapter I will consider more closely where the faith in using INCH derives from and how it can be related to the Finnish conceptions of nation.

Contrary to idea of official mandate, individual initiatives have become important way of participation. Initiatives however highlight the vertical aspects of communication between civil society and administration. Furthermore according to different studies, the initiatives are often disrespected emphasizing the authoritative character of Finnish public administration (e.g. Luthakallio 2007).

Pasi Saukkonen (2003, 32–37) points out that the Finnish civil society has become more tolerant towards cultural and economic differences than it used to be. Nation-state identity has shown signs of clear fractures, which is understandable under global pressures, while multiculturalism has found its way to Finland. However, Finland has been able to sustain its strong national identity extraordinarily well in comparison to many other European countries (Saukkonen 2003, 14–16, 35–36).

1.3 Participation on the Internet

The Internet has become an important sphere of public engagement by creating a space for new forms of social interaction, activity, and communication. The Internet is first and foremost a social form, a new form of organizing social relations and simultaneously a real political form (Rosanvallón 2008, 68). In addition to the possibilities the Internet gives to actors of civil society, its possibilities have become important in administrative discourses as well (Bennett 2008). The

administrational discourse aims at creating channels for empowering dialogue between the citizens and the politicians in order to rationalize the political participation, whilst the actionist discourse on the other hand emphasizes the importance of the emergence of low level political forms that would arise from the civil society and canalize to political activity, without any administrative intervention (Häyhtiö & Rinne 2006, 2). The snowball effect on the Internet makes it possible for micro political activity to have consequences on macro political level because the threshold for micro political activity online is quite low (ibid., 10.)

According to a Swedish study of the possibilities of deliberation on ICT-based services, it turned out that the discussion groups linked to municipal administration were the most deliberative channels of web-services (ibid., 715). They were evaluated based on power neutrality, a democratic ideal emphasizing the role of superiority of argument and rational discussion freed from background powers (ibid., 712). The power neutrality can however be neglected by asymmetries in administrative, economic, and cultural power, the latter consisting of values and norms (ibid., 713). I am especially interested in how the cultural asymmetries affect the formation of the political culture around INCH in combination with some administrative asymmetries of for example moderation procedures. There have been suggestions that e-government could reduce the asymmetries of cultural power by creating alternative forms of political participation (Klein 1999; Pruijt 2002). I will however show during the analysis that in the case of INCH the cultural asymmetries remain central.

Although, early democratic theories on the Internet highlighted the possibilities of creating online public spheres based on rational communitarian deliberation, several studies have proved this belief inappropriate, and “the future of Internet politics will not be the strong democracy of the deliberative model but ‘politics as usual’: ideological distortion and coercion, partisan rhetoric, dogmatic enclaves, activist disruptions and destabilizing conflict” (Dahlberg 2007, 50). Drawing on post-Marxist discourse theory, it is suggested that the Internet should be rather seen as an ‘agonistic’ sphere, where certain discourses dominate over the others, but its “discursive radicalization” could lead to possibility of “counter publics” online (ibid., 55–58). In fact, the agonist tendencies deriving from the prevailing systemic antagonism turn out to be central problems in INCH as well, and in the case of politically and socially dependent young people, it could lead to even more serious problems than among adults. On the other hand, the Internet can provide something more positive and social, such as jokes, mimicry, and irony, the agonist pluralism, which is typical to some post-Marxist theories, cannot reach (cf. ibid., 156; Mouffe 1999).

The most active participants on the Internet have been young people who have lived most parts of their civic lives after the breakthrough of the Internet as an everyday form of social action¹². For the people born before 1970 the experience of belongingness to their generations and the ways of political engagement are created by the expectations of the mass media and quite uniform culture,

¹² Statistics Finland: 2008 Survey on ICT Usage.
http://www.stat.fi/til/sutivi/2008/sutivi_2008_2009-04-27_tie_002_en.html, accessed 30th October 2009.

while for younger people more individual forms of action for example on the Internet, are ways of creating identities, adhering with the surrounding society, and achieving political and artistic objectives (Häyhtiö & Rinne 2006, 15; Nieminen 2004, 119; Paakkunainen 2005a.) Because of possibilities of identity creation and physically forceless environment, the Internet is ideally much less binding than more traditional arenas of political participation although it contains some new pitfalls as well. In the case of INCH, it is exactly the new ‘actionist’ participation culture and new forms of social media INCH is trying to integrate as a part of more administrated political processes, but simultaneously it tries to manage political participation. INCH could either be interpreted as an extension to the public administration or to the civil society. It tries to achieve some actionist goals by administrating civic engagement.

There is a need to both applications connecting the ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ perspectives and for more substantial research to understand these possibilities better (Bennett 2008, Coleman 2008.) Because INCH doesn’t represent solely the administrative or actionist discourses it creates new kind of social interaction and problematizes the separation of administration and the civil society. The different actors in INCH create socially meaningful interaction that could be analysed from a dualistic perspective as an interaction between two subject positions of a citizen, an interaction between the exterior percept of a good citizen and the interior affect driving to engagement. However, the opposition is not produced as much between actionist and administered discourses, but more between the people (non-)participating under the hegemonic macro level discourse, and those reproducing it.

Because of the governmental basis of INCH as well as certain peculiarities of Finnish political culture manifested in it, it needs to be studied in relation to longer traditions of Finnish political culture. This kind of approach hasn’t been widely used in Finnish social research concerning electronic participation before, but it is necessary in order to understand the particularities of INCH in comparison to foreign Internet based portals. In many countries, young people’s activation portals are based on discussion forums and blogs, etc., and are less linked to the administrative system of local governance. This creates wider open possibilities of deliberation and counter action, but they are less linked to the administrative structures.

1.4 E-Government and Finnish Knowledge Society

Finnish state has been building a so called *knowledge society* for last two decades. The aim of the program is to “increase competitiveness and productivity, social and regional equality, and people’s wellbeing and life-quality by utilising knowledge and communication technologies in the whole society” (Rantanen 2005, 12). In the 1990’s Finland ranked number one in some information society surveys, albeit in the aspects of democracy Finland has not been able to reclaim that position as the Internet connections and new technology have not been used in ways a high rank would require. What is illustrative to the Finnish knowledge society project is the totality of the program as a “program of the whole nation” (Häyrynen-Alestalo & Pelkonen 2004; Häyhtiö 2004). Information technology has acquired a special status in the Finnish context, so that each

ministry and part of the public administration has to continuously look for new applications of information technology in its functioning despite their unknown social benefits (Sassi 2000, 193).

The Government has paid a lot of attention in supporting political participation using new technologies, made possible by the Internet (Häyhtiö & Rinne 2006.) For example, the recent Citizen Participation Policy Programme (2003–2007)¹³ published by the Finnish Government emphasises the possibilities created by the Internet for civic participation and engagement. It resulted in the development of two web portals <http://www.otakantaa.fi> and <http://www.kansanvalta.fi/>. Another example of great effort put on political participation on the Internet is the Finnish Government's Child and Youth Policy Programme 2007–2011¹⁴, which I will consider more deeply the fifth chapter. It draws attention to the lack of political participation among adolescents and emphasizes the possibilities of eDemocracy, political and democratic participation using the Internet portals created in co-operation with the Government. A third example is the participation portal Valto¹⁵ for all Finnish children, which is developed in association with the Finnish Children's Parliament¹⁶ (cf. Willow 1997). As information technology has become central across Finnish public administration, also the Ministry of Justice has paid attention on e-governance¹⁷.

In local level, there have been various activation experiments for citizens on the Internet. In Tampere, *Mansefoorumi* was created *Mansetori*- network community that was developed as a part of a research project at the University of Tampere. The project resulted in a study showing that a network portal based on people's own activity and discussion, i.e. deliberation, for example in the forms of publishing their own network magazines turned out to be quite a success (Martikainen 2004; Hokka & Laine & Lehtonen & Minkkinen 2004). On the other hand, the city of Oulu, which is maybe the most technologically profiled city in Finland, has developed an internet portal¹⁸ helping the inhabitants to create municipal initiatives.

Despite the effort the Government has been putting on the development of new forms of electric participation., according to a recent UN study¹⁹, Finland was ranked number 45 in E-participation index, a comparison between 192 nations, although readiness for Finland for electric governance and participation was much higher, with rank 15. It means that some countries possessing much lower technological abilities have better and more comprehensive participation forms on the Internet²⁰. Finnish E-governmental services are especially lack in feedback mechanisms showing

¹³Policy Program for Civic Engagement. The Finnish Government. Accessed 18th January 2009,

<http://www.om.fi/en/Etusivu/Ajankohtaista/Arkistoidutsisallot/Kansalaisvaikuttamisenpolitiikkaohjelma/Tietoahjelmasta>

¹⁴ <http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2008/liitteet/opm21.pdf?lang=en>, accessed 25th March 2009.

¹⁵ <http://www.valto.fi/>

¹⁶ <http://www.lastenparlamentti.fi/>

¹⁷ *Demokratiapolitiikan suuntaviivoja*. Ministry of Justice, 2009.

¹⁸ <http://www.aloiteoululle.fi/>

¹⁹ *UN E-Government Survey 2008. From E-Government to Connected Governance*. United Nations. <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UN/UNPAN028607.pdf>, accessed 14.4.2009

²⁰ Of Western liberal democracies only Ireland, Portugal, Italy, Germany, and Iceland were ranking lower than Finland in the comparison. Despite Iceland, it is interesting that these countries are Roman Catholic except for Germany in which the Hegelian democratic tradition has also like in Finland been very central to the political culture.

citizens that their voices are indeed taken seriously²¹. Even if the network could be useful in organizing civic action, if the real organizational forms and principles are not changed, the Internet alone cannot contribute very much. According to the recent publication by the Ministry of Justice²², the priorities of Finnish knowledge society development have been put on services and to the role of customer, instead of emphasizing participatory citizenship or substantiating democracy. It has to be asked whether conventional administrative forms should be transformed rather than the possibilities of new technology enthusiastically emphasized as such, in order to substantially empower young citizens.

The Finnish nation building project beginning in the 19th century was based on philosophical thoughts of education, knowledge, and civilisation. What is peculiar to these concepts in the Finnish culture is that these are things that have to be taught by teachers and civil servants ‘top-down’ to the citizens that are objects of education by higher and more civilized Fennoman authorities. The people had to be taught and civilised specifically about the ‘authenticity’ of being Finnish and the truth of Finnish nation (Stenius 2008, 43–45)²³. Nowadays we talk about knowledge society instead of information society like many other countries refer to the civilised side of the concept (Hearn 2004). Knowledge as a concept can be interpreted in a more civilised fashion downsizing the technical aspects of information²⁴. The importance of civilised education ‘top-down’ is associated with administrative arguments that speak about knowledge society rather than information society. (Nevanlinna & Relander 2006, 38-39.)

Knowledge has become a central concept in concerning survival strategies of Finland in the 21st century. It is something that we have to teach ourselves, and we have to be well educated by authorities through the schooling system in order to survive in the global competition. The Fennoman way of seeing education from an authoritative ‘top-down’ perspective is still central to the survival strategies of Finnish nation, although the threats might have become displaced from the 19th century. As I will later show, INCH seems to be ideal for the knowledge society project in the way that it utilises the Internet as a tool in global competition, and it also works as a direct form of civic education. Therefore the socio-historical approach to e-government seems specifically suitable in the Finnish cultural context.

Rättilä (2001, 202–203) describes the contemporary administrative discourse on individualised citizenship that is restricted to the role of a client or a consumer. The public administration’s role

²¹ According to the UN study: “For e-participation to be successful and to become the norm, governments need to create an environment that allows citizens to voice their views online and more importantly, to create a feedback mechanism which shows citizens that their views are taken seriously. This requires trust between citizens and their governments, as well as a robust infrastructure that allows citizens access to decision makers.”

²² *Demokratiapolitiikan suuntaviivoja*. (Ministry of Justice 2009, 130)

²³ Fennomanian culture of one truth and the unity of Finnish nation became the hegemony in a very special way incomparable to most other cultures. In Sweden and Denmark for example, the state was more divided into two norm system, as the old aristocratic kingdom was face with the growing civil society (Stenius 2008, 25–26). In Finland there was not this kind of opposition and both the upper and lower class people almost in collaboration became part of the Fennomanian project as people had to defend their own independent identity as a nation.

²⁴ Information refers to scheme, draft or an idea in its Latin origins, so its ‘technicality’ is not properly justifiable (Nevanlinna & Relander 2006, 38.)

is to organise production of services, and the clients only possess a possibility of giving feedback of the quality and content of services. If administration is responsive to these feedback mechanisms, administrative discourse has no other value for further public action by ordinary citizens. From this point of view INCH could be interpreted as a feedback channel for young people as clients of municipal administrations. For example some Finnish commercial companies have built systems quite similar to INCH to collect feedback from customers²⁵. On the other hand it could teach that political participation has to be productive and can yield to visible short-term results compatible with the Governmental emphasis put on education towards entrepreneurship (Tomperi & Piattoeva 2005) which is also related to the new economic discourses positioning Finland in the global economic competition and attributing to the goal of all governmental programs to enhance national competitiveness and economic well-being of Finland.

1.5. Participation of Children and Young People

There has been international interest in the subject of children's participation in societal and political projects. Riepl & Wintersberger (1999, 226) define participation as a means of achieving political goals by taking voluntary action in an attempt to exert influence on political decision-making processes. It is a question of authenticity of participation versus manipulation of quasi-actors: whether or not participation in effect creates room for action or if it is only used as means of legitimize political action (de Winter, 1997). Delegation of power to young people can be divided into following different categories: manipulation, decoration, assigned but informed, consulted and informed, adult initiated, child initiated, and equal partnership (Riepl & Wintersberger 1999, 228; Hart 1992).

Many scholars for example in the UK have been considering children's rights to participate from a wider perspective and pointed out the problems of whether children really are empowered or not (e.g. Prout 2003; Roberts 2003; Craig 2003; Rayner 2003). The democratic right for children's participation didn't arise from the crisis of democracy manifested by low voting turnout as a solution to it by means of educating these so called 'civic skills' of different participatory forms and models. Instead, the idea of children's participation was created for their own sake. Women or children are not adequately represented by middle-aged men for example. One group cannot represent another one, since representation of person's interests presupposes a shared identity or qualities that grown-ups cannot possess in behalf of children (Phillips 2000, 14–18). Prout (2003, 20–21) claims that a general request for children's participation arose as an answer to problems such as children's inequality, poverty, and non-participation. Children shouldn't participate in order to become good adult citizens but for their own sake, because there is no one else who could represent children. Therefore children's participation should not only be seen from the perspective of conventional vertical relationship between grown-ups and children.

²⁵ www.sonera.fi/aivo and www.neuvonantajat.fi.

As Prout (2003, 12–13) appoints, this gives rise to the interesting problem of children's participation since children are at the same time dependent on adults as they should be treated as equal political subjects. Children should be heard not only to teach them conventional methods of participation, but because it is their right, and because they have equally valuable thoughts of how they should be educated and live their lives. Under 30-year old people's voting turnout has been declining even more than among older people, although it is not a peculiarity of this age group, and should not be interpreted only as a problem of younger age groups. Voting represents the corner stone of conventional representative democracy. However, representative democracy based on voting should not be considered as a self-evident ideal form of democracy. In fact some survey studies show that although voting turnout has been on decline, young people are interested in political participation in multiple ways.

Kari Paakkunainen (2005a, 40–43) has been studying 15–30 year old Finnish people's political engagement online. The Internet was treated as liberating from the local environment (67 % of the respondents). "Revolution of communication acrobats" is named as an online forum suitable for discussion about world politics (73%). Internet is a fine forum for learning from others and for combining values (71 %) and as a vehicle for identity formation (60 %). The Internet is seen as an asset for the global movement (58 %) and as a useful tool when building ecologically superior world (27 %). Paakkunainen (2005a, 43) claims the first mentioned figures illustrate that the Internet is a forum of action and dialogue, which is opposed to institutions of power. The fact that half of 15-30 year old people in Finland would be ready to break law in order to make global movement's voices heard shows that national identity with its legal connotations is breaking and that young people really are interested in politics and political activity. In comparison to users of INCH from whom I gathered data, they were much less positive about illegal activity.

According to Paakkunainen (2005a, 40–43), two thirds of young people think that they need more open knowledge on international level (69 %) and six in ten that we need more political participation on international level (59 %). However, only less than half believe in more formal forms of participation in digital democracy: "I believe in developing decision making on the Internet (49 %)". INCH clearly represents a decision-making system on the Internet, but according to the study it is not supported by at least half of young people.

Is democracy approaching its ideal in the digital space and dialogue (Street 1997)? Is the best arena for political discussion to be found among free and equal citizens or within the spheres of state (Bohman 1996)? Is the internet the right place for the power of the best argument? These questions remain unanswered in this study. From a sociological point of view they seem less important than the question, how the Internet is used in building political culture.

1.6 Finnish Youth Work and Civic Education

In Finland for example Haikkola (2005) pointed out, while studying young people's activation projects orchestrated by the Finnish Government, young people are typically given a separate

place, where they can only deal with some minor issues. They are not really empowered but instead they are taught that they are not really welcome to the larger arenas of politics (Haikkola 2005). They are not seen as equal members of the society and their political space is limited. They are also taught it is normal and that they shouldn't even have access to more extensive politics. Some scholars ask, if there is some kind of a hidden curriculum of civic education in many civic educational projects (Aapola 2006). In the case of INCH, democracy is indeed seen as a system of creation of direct initiatives, which is the goal of its multiphase process the ideas go through. Prout (2005) and Roberts (2005) however suggest that young people should be given more than just telling their opinion on certain issues, namely equal rights to create culture and discuss about it.

In contrary, to young people's civic education emphasizing transforming certain civic values and skills, critical pedagogists such as Tomperi and Piattoeva (2005) suggest that education should rather be used in a critical sense than as transforming knowledge. Vuorikoski and Kiilakoski (2005) suggest dialogics in the sense of Paulo Freire (2005) to be taken part of school education. The dialogue should be open, and teachers should be equal to students and self-critical instead of constituting authority over students. It could also integrate young people with adults, for more comprehensive communication, help to strengthen the horizontal communication culture in Finland, and release them from the negative aspects of obedience that in my opinion the prevalence of mental disorders and suicides show.

A more critical and dialogic approach would better relate to international accounts on children's participation like those suggested by Prout (2005) and Roberts (2005), whilst the Finnish educational culture has traditionally lain far from these kinds of ideas. The roots of Finnish civic education date back to at least the beginning of the 19th century, when the Fennomanian movement started the nation building project (Liikanen 2003; Stenius 1987; Stenius 2008). Finland didn't really exist as a unite nation before that period. Education was the key element in establishing Finland as a single nation. During that time political concepts were created in Finnish language and educated to all Finnish speaking people, since Finnish language had not really been used as a part of politics during the rule of Swedish empire until 1809 (Hyvärinen et al. 2003). As I already mentioned, the authenticity of Finnish nation was based on universalistic and unitary thoughts of Finland and the good of the nation (Stenius 1997, 169–170). Therefore politics was about who was able to define what was in the interest of Finnish nation as a whole, and education became a device of civil servants with the help of teachers to establish the hegemony of national good in the minds of all people living in the Finnish territory. It was emphasized that all people were to work for the sake of Finnish nation, and for example philanthropist activity was accepted in the form of education and coercion of Finnish citizens and young people, making them able to become economically responsible, instead of becoming dependent on economic support. (Stenius 2008, 12–15; cf. Satka 2003).

Mirja Satka (2003) analyses Finnish conceptions of children and child welfare using a historical approach. In the late 19th century Finnish children were considered as being “in natural state” and “acting according to their natural instincts”. Mothers had to introduce children to “truth and good”, and children were expected to be “ignorant but loyal, obedient and thankful for the upbringing and education given to them”. There was a strict hierarchy between adults and children. (ibid., 74.) As a solution to the problem posed by ill-mannered children, Finland followed the Norwegian model of child welfare procedures and children indicating poor moral were treated individually as sick. Also preventive strategies were used, and such things as leisure-time activities, basic education and day-care for children were established. (ibid., 75.)

After the Finnish civil war in 1917, Finland was divided into Reds and Whites. Many of the Red children were left orphans after the war, and they were thought by the Whites to be lacking the skills and moral values necessary to grow into educated citizens. Later the Red children were also included in child welfare politics that used numerous preventive measures to fight against children’s deviance. Especially public schools, becoming compulsory after 1921, became a place to exercise preventive measures and educate obedient citizens. (ibid., 76–79.)

Civic education of young people of the first part of 20th century didn’t really see children as active political subjects at all. Later, especially in the 1960’s and the 1970’s children were recognised as future citizens, and for example a secret organisation was established within the governmental education department in order to prohibit young people from adopting leftist values (Suoranta 2005, 185). Civic education based on conspiracy some thirty years ago raises the question of the nature of civic education today.

In the Finnish cultural context the position of youth research twofold in pressures of political aims of the state on one hand, and the academic request of freedom on the other (e.g. Hoikkala & Suurpää 2005, 286–287). Finnish historical background rises the question whether Finnish society is still afraid, much more than the UK for example in spite of new children’s participation programs, of young people becoming ideologically and politically active (cf. Prout 2003; Roberts 2003; Craig 2003; Rayner 2003)? Is INCH an attempt to solve the legitimacy problem of Finnish political structure by not really changing anything but just pretends to have solved the problem? Or is it an attempt to educate young citizens, to be obedient for the Finnish cultural truth of authenticity of the Finnish nation by fractioning their possibilities on local environment keeping the political system in hands of the elite? Because there is a wide amount of research showing young people in Finland are indeed politically active (e.g. Paakkunainen 2005b), the disinterestedness of young people in politics seems somewhat unsound and unjust statement. These questions will be addressed in the fifth and sixth chapter, where I analyze the governmental account and moderators views on INCH. What kind of consequences they have for the culture of INCH from the perspective of its users will be addressed in the seventh chapter. Now I will further problematize the evaluation of civic projects.

1.7 Problems with Evaluating Civic Projects

What kinds of Internet-portals have the best chances in activating people politically and what kind of role should control mechanisms and public institutions possess with these portals? Should the existing political institutions be somehow reformed to make the interaction between micro political activity and institutional politics work better? How could INCH pass over the contradictory nature of the simultaneous actionist goals while using the administrative means? Does INCH work as a mean of civic education supporting the current political hegemony or is INCH open enough to create deliberation and even counter action either on the website, or in educational situations, when teachers and youth workers are in dialogue with young people about the nature and the purpose of INCH and the Finnish political culture in general?

In order to answer these questions, I am interested in the youth discourses in general, but even more the interaction between young people, moderators, and the Government. By considering INCH I am not only interested in this specific case, but trying to make some generalizations and find what is sociologically specific to political engagement both on the Internet and among the younger age cohorts in Finland. The aim is also to reflect what kind of educational and normative goals the institutional sphere of politics is trying to implement and generally, what kind of battle there exists over the social forms of identity creation and political participation.

As I will show, the Government is addressing web community as a central aspect in eDemocracy hoping that young people would create their own political culture within the frames set by the Government. However, the means of activation as an administrative program come 'top-down' trying to manage civic activity (cf. Coleman 2008). Since the Government is addressing the Internet environment and new ways of young people's political participation, it seems reasonable to ask how the Internet portals like INCH could answer to the actionist demands. As a publicly funded project, it has some administrative aspects like the institutional division of its users to young people and moderators, and the success of it is mostly measured in administrative measures such as the successfulness of initiatives created in INCH.

These kinds of theoretical problems are anchored in the particular cultural context they arise from and there are no general and universal solutions to them. In INCH as well many of the actors are not very young and they represent cultural forms untypical to individual political participation and identity creation, but instead more typical to more 'total' culture of mass media and uniformity (Häyhtiö and Rinne 2006, 15). Thus the interaction between people representing different cultural forms may lead to fatal contradictions for the success of the service. INCH is formed as a compromise that should be understood from the point of view of folding different discourses and actor groups together in a pioneering way.

The success of the service should not be analysed only by looking at the sum of people using the service, the number of expressed ideas, or whether users gained more interest in parliamentary and conventional forms of political action. Instead, I will analyse the different values in regard to the service, and how these values are transformed. The 'civic skills education' perspective is very

important to the Government, but even if INCH failed in this respect, it could make young people think about the old models of political activity, and maybe create new ones. If it succeeds from the civic educational perspective, the project could be a failure from some point of view highlighting the actionist demands and more liberal tradition. From the perspective of radical democracy, INCH could turn out as a successful project without a single user, if it could create open discussion and dialogue about the foundations of Finnish society and political culture in educational situation.

Multiple studies addressing youth engagement don't take dynamic aspects of value creation into account, but see political culture and system complete with certain practices (like voting) and certain values (expressing your interests) to be transformed (e.g. Bennett et al. 2008; Print 2007; Niemi & Finkell 2006; Torney-Purta 2001). These studies are problematic since they don't take into account the societal context in which political discourses appear. Therefore, they fail to see a connection between current cultural norms and environment with the problems low voting turnouts pose, and cannot reflect upon the discursive struggle over the politics young people are posing. It is thus unclear how young people should be educated as long as it is not really understood, why young people are not interested in politics. Some superficial suggestions about a 'here-and-now' generation that is consumer oriented are suggested, but the reasons behind are left unclear (e.g. Print 2007, 333; Galston 2004, 263).

Individualism has become a central hypothesis in many sociological theories characterising the current societal atmosphere. However, it seems that democratic studies often see engagement in a specific way. They seem to assume that people would try to achieve their goals if they only knew how to deal with democratic practices (means). After this they would only be required to be educated about the norm (value) of the importance of democratic engagement. Finnish young people are going through similar globalisation processes similar to other Western young people, although with their own particularities. My study is aiming at showing how deeper analysis of young people's civic engagement could be studied in contrast to the rather superficial accounts described above.

After all I am dealing with a project that doesn't have a single subject and neither a single discourse from which perspective INCH could be analysed from. Similar problems arise while evaluating any developmental projects (Mosse 2005, 157–162). In the following chapters I will analyse INCH as being a social laboratory, or a social phenomenon, in which different discourses and actors are folding together. I will analyse INCH as a playground of different discourses and because the novelty of INCH, leave the question, of which discourse is going to win, open. Instead I will consider different possibilities that the future of INCH could realize.

In sum, to conclude democracy, information technology, and young people's participation have very specific nuances in Finnish culture. It is going to be analysed how INCH reproduces these nuances, and what are its possibilities to overcome some of the problems posed in this chapter.

2 Theory and Method: Socio-semiotic Approach and Discourse

Theory

In this chapter I will consider the theoretical sociological background and the method I will use to analyze the formation of political culture, which I assume to be socially produced and constituted. I will first discuss the actors and structures from a sociological perspective. I will overview different conceptions of discourse analysis in order to position the specific theories I will use later in the study. I will then conceptualize socio-semiotic theory in a way that it is possible to apply in the actual analysis. Furthermore, I will discuss some political and theoretical concepts from the perspective of socio-semiotic approach. Finally I express a theoretical division of different ways of relating to INCH. The actual data I am analyzing in the second part of this study is going to be related to this theoretical division.

2.1 Role of Actors and Structure

In the introduction I categorised the actors around INCH loosely into five different groups. Divisions are always discursive, but these groups have all their distinct institutional qualities, for example they work in different organisations etc. In the analysis I will analyse data gathered from only three of these actors, since they cover all the most essential actors. In the analysis I will however consider how these actors are not pre-existing entities but constructed, reproduced, and renewed in a socio-semiotic process. The original division was mainly made in order to decide from whom to collect data from. After combining the actors of INCH into different groups I have established a theoretical base structure that I claim not to be static or natural, but it helps to understand the further processes occurring around INCH.

Different sociological theories have lately shown that social action and social structure cannot be considered separate entities and their division is rather analytic. The conceptions about the reality people possess are often so self-evident that they are not even recognised as knowledge, i.e., conceptual dispositions that are nowadays called discourses (Berger & Luckmann 1994). Despite their inherent self-evidence, these discourses are practically significant in shaping social action. (Sulkunen 1997, 14.) Although realists claim that, for example, unemployment is a real problem and creates real anxiety, it is still discursive in the sense, that not all people understand the meaning of unemployment in the same way, shaping the reality of unemployed people and their (power) relations differently, therefore the discourses on unemployment are a fruitful object of sociological studies (ibid., 16). In general, action creates (renews) and maintains (reproduces) the structures, while the structures act as self-evident rules that themselves shape the forms of action possible to take. For example in Bourdieu's (1984) theory the often self-evident dispositions produces the habitus of the social actor, which is constitutional for the social action but also the power relations between different actors (Sulkunen 1997, 15).

The traditional theory of action in a Parsonian sense assumes that action would be understandable as such, and values (namely norms) and meanings behind action could be separated from each

other. Under these conditions action would arise as a consequence of the combination of means and ambitions. (ibid., 24–26.) The problem of INCH would be as simple as asking what different actors ambitions with INCH are. Namely, these conditions would make it possible to analyse in what sense INCH works in a rather static context of certain democratic values (equality) and meanings (e.g. representative system). Instead, I will ask in what ways different actors see democracy and participation as values, what are the meanings attributed to these concepts and how they are interrelated. How do the goals and ambitions become created in the process and how do the actors constitute means and oppositions for other actors? In what way then do the actors constitute a system providing means for other actors and for what kind of ambitions?

As I mentioned, Anglo-Saxon studies on youth engagement often see democracy as a rather complete and ready-made system, with certain means (e.g. voting) and certain values (norm of expressing your interests) following the Parsonian theory of action. The civic knowledge, civic values and civic participation are considered as separate entities that could be transformed by traditional methods of teaching in the informational and knowledge transferring sense (e.g. Print 2007, 337). I want to separate myself from this kind of thinking and analyse the formation of the political culture that is the bases for the construction and structuration of values and meanings making democracy possible or impossible.

My approach can be characterized as deconstructing a discursive cycle of representation, where actors form a circular perimeter of meanings and values around INCH. A discursive cycle roughly means a path along which certain symbols circulate, and possibly change their meaning. The discursively constructed world is never made by one or two actors but discourses circulate among multiple agents or agencies, who only become agents or actors through discursive production (Juhila 1999, 182–186; cf. Callon 1998a). Because I am interested in the different aspects of the culture of INCH, I am not going to concentrate on a single group of actors, but will try to cover all important actors and try to analytically reconstruct the discursive cycle. In the case of INCH the typical cycle between political superstructure such as political institutions and substructure such as civil society can be broken down to a semi-circle in a way I will explain later. I will consider what discursive cycles generate the foundations for the functioning of INCH analyzing different modalities actors describe and use in order to determine other actors.

2.2 On Discourse Theory

As a general framework of my study I use the ideas arising from general discourse theory, which arises from a constructionist theoretical background, which assumes that the use of language is constructive and constitutive for the social reality, and doesn't only describe it. Discourse theory is a rather loose combination of different intellectual traditions, but the centrality of discourses as constitutive forces in shaping the reality is on the background of all these traditions. In general it is assumed that reality is constituted as a combination of different systems of signification that are parallel or competing with each other. Meaningful action is context-sensitive and actors are

attached to these systems of signification under which the use of language produces real consequences. (Jokinen & Juhila & Suoninen 1993, 17–18.)

Discourse theory emerged in the late 1970's as an intellectual response to the problematization of the mainstream thinking of that time. Rather than offering new theory with certain core assumptions, it offered a new perspective for analyzing the rules and meanings that condition the construction of social, political, and cultural identity. (Torfing 2005, 1). Discourse theory has produced new concepts and arguments helping to transcend objectivistic, reductionist, and rationalistic bias of modern social thinking by emphasizing the role of discourse in shaping social, political, and cultural interpretations (*ibid.*, 3).

In the first phase of discourse theory, a cross-disciplinary attempt arose as a critique for structuralist theories seeing reality as constituted by immanent and 'natural' structures. Its first generation saw discourse as a textual unit, whilst the second generation broadened discourse to concern wider set of social practices. (*ibid.*, 5–6). For example Michel Foucault (2005) representing the second generation in seeing discourses as a form of action structured by compositions of utterances. He was however more interested in the rules governing the production of such statements than considering the actual form and content of semiotic practices. A third generation of discourse theory extends the notion of discourse to cover all social phenomena. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have been trying to draw together from all these ideas belonging to the third generation of discourse theory in order to develop a synthetic post-Marxist, post-structuralist, and postmodern political theory. (Torfing 2005, 7–9.)

Laclau and Mouffe (2001) agree with Foucault (2005), Fairclough (2001), and Hodge and Kress (1988) that discourse is internally related to power. As Laclau and Mouffe (2001) define it, discourse is quasi-transcendental, historically variable condition of possibility of what we say, think, imagine and do. Even such seemingly non-discursive regimes as technology, institutions, and economic processes are constructed through discursive systems of difference, so that discourse is co-extensive with the social. Together with another critical discourse theorist Fairclough, they reject the naturalist ontology implicit in the idea that discourse is determined by extra-discursive powers at the level of economy or state. In their articulation theory, they oppose the conception, that social world constituted of such classifications as gender and age would be supra-discursive, i.e., a structural condition rather than object of discursive constructions. (cf. Torfing 2005, 9.)

I refer to Laclau's and Mouffe's (2001) semiotics of dislocation of hegemonic discourse in this study. I will carry this narration throughout the analysis and consider how well INCH can be related to it. Their conceptualization is based on a certain narration about a struggle over a discourse. At first, all forms of social practice take place against a background of historically specific discourses that are relational systems of signification. Second, a discourse is constructed in and through hegemonic struggles aiming to establish a political and moral-intellectual leadership through the articulation of meaning and identity. Third, the hegemonic articulation of meaning is intrinsically linked to the construction of social antagonism, i.e., the exclusion of some threat-

ening other in order to stabilize the discourse. Fourth, a hegemonic discourse becomes dislocated when it is confronted by new events it cannot explain or represent. Finally, the dislocation of the discursive structure causes the subject position created by the discourse to split up. (Torfinn 2005, 14–17.)

In the context of Finnish political participation it is evident that the Finnish history shapes the current discourses of youth participation and this point was stressed out already in the previous chapter. The second point becomes clear in light of the Finnish history of fennoman people, who have established a reasonably stable hegemonic identity of Finnishness. In later chapters I will see in practice in what sense the conformist discourses possessed by the Government face new more globally and locally oriented discourses of youth culture that try to dislocate the hegemonic discourse, and in what sense the subject position of young people splits. This splitting is analytically separated into two different ideal types of young by using socio-semiotic approach by Hodge and Kress (1988). My study is an empirical study that exemplifies how socio-semiotic approach can be broadened with the Laclau's and Mouffe's (2001) discourse theory in practical situations.

2.3 Social Semiotics: Values, Modality, and Speaker Images

The socio-semiotic approach is based on discursive critique of Parson's theory as well as on an idea of treating modalities that occur in narrations as constitutive forces to subjectivity. The modalities of action constitute the positions by describing the limits and boundaries for their action, but also their inner self-image. Furthermore, these narrations of action are furnished by the way in which speaker enounces or denounces herself. Different actors of INCH are going to be related to each other by using these kinds of techniques. I will mainly refer to Pekka Sulkunen and Jukka Törrönen (1997a; 1997b) in describing the theory of modalities and also Greimas' actantial model in which these modalities could be applied to.

According to some discourse theorists such as Fairclough (2001), value in text and action it describes arises from the contextual dimension of discourse, i.e., from its relation to ideology, attitudes, or power relations outside the text. The socio-semiotic approach differs from this by considering the ways in which values are constantly reproduced. I take rather pragmatic stand, and values are seen as both contextual albeit intra-discursively reproduced and renewed. The concept of modality is based on the idea that no discursive description of action is value-free. Furthermore, values are not only contextual, but they are produced on the enunciative level of texts.

The first one of the socio-semiotic tools I will use is Greimas' actantial model. The model is not a universal description of social action, but it illustrates the fact that values are not only norms and that they are inter-subjective, not only between a subject and an object. The syntagmatic model distinguishes seven logical positions: subject, object, sender, receiver, anti-subject, opponent, and helper, that can all be occupied by a thing, a person or a discourse based on different valuations.

The sender defines the object valuable and sends the subject toward it for the sake of the receiver. The subject uses help from helpers in fighting against opponents harnessed by the anti-subject, who tries to prevent the subject from realising the object, as illustrated in the diagram 1. The model turns out to be a good device illustrating the story of INCH from educational perspective, but it also theoretically shows how values are not only norms limiting social aspects, but related to the motivations and evaluations made by different actors. (Sulkunen & Törrönen 1997a, 47–48.)

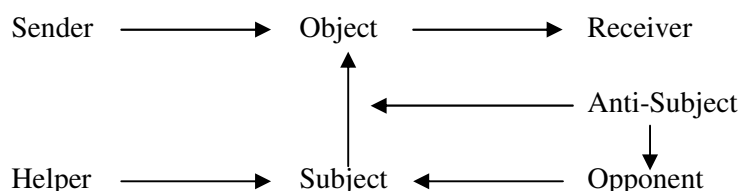


Diagram 1. Greimas' actantial model (ibid., 47)

The actantial model gives us a basic frame, which helps to analyse different stories, although all existing stories consist of different parts that all could be drawn an individual actantial model of. In this study the actantial model is used in order to organise the 'big picture', i.e., the story connecting different actor groups together. In practice the actantial model has to be reconstructed from a text by the researcher and it always presumes an interpretation. However, in order to reconstruct the story in the most reliable way, I will now introduce modalities of action.

The concept of modality arises from critical linguistic theory of Halliday (1985) in the sense used in Hodge and Kress's (1988) theory of social semiotics. Language can be looked from the point of view of the functions it serves. The functions I will be analysing further are ideational and interpersonal. They answer to what is talked about (*utterance*), and to whom and by whom (*enunciation*). In the phrase "I think the cat is black", the story "cat is black" is called utterance and "I think" the enunciation. Modality is associated with power relations especially in the interpersonal sense of language. (Sulkunen & Törrönen 1997a, 48–49.)

On the level of utterance, i.e., what is said about the world, modalities are called pragmatic (ibid., 57). They can be divided into modalities occurring from the point of view of the sender (exotactic) and to those those occurring from the point of view of the subject (endotactic). For example in the fifth chapter where I analyse the Youth Policy Program, the Government takes the position of a sender and young people take the position of a subject. The Government as sender sets constraints to young people talking about what they *have to* and what are their *abilities*. Furthermore, they can possibly evaluate the success of the Youth Policy Program and *know* whether young people fulfil the demands set by the Youth Policy Program. On the other hand, young people themselves would see the situation from their own perspective: what they *want* or *don't want*, do they have the *know-how* to fulfil it. Furthermore, they couldn't evaluate their success as outsiders and know whether they have succeeded from the perspective of the governmental program, but instead their action can result in their *believing* or *not believing* in that what they have done has been important. The modalities are described in following table 1.

	Virtual	Actual	Realized
Exotactic	Having to	Ability	Knowing (recognition)
Endotactic	Wanting	Know-how	Believing (self-recognition)

Table 1. Pragmatic modalities (Sulkunen & Törrönen 1997a, 53).

The subject can either be willing to or not willing to, knowing how or not know how, to reach the object defined as valuable by the sender. The sender usually forces the subject (having to) reach the object, and evaluates whether the subject was able to reach it or not. These species of pragmatic modalities can all be manifested in four different configurations such as having to (mandatory), having to not to (prohibition), not having to (voluntary), not having to not to (allowance), that have specific nuances although I am mainly concentrating on the general outline, namely on the emphasis put on endotactic vs. exotactic modalities. Therefore I will not further consider all possibilities here. The virtual and actual modalities, especially those of *having to*, *allowing*, *wanting*, *ability*, and *know-how* will be the most important pragmatic modalities I will be utilising in the analysis.

Pragmatic modalities however only describe the story, which is enounced, but not the enunciation itself. Especially in sociological study, where multiple actors are analysed, in order to understand when a single speaker (respondent for example) takes the position of a subject or a sender for example, it is important to understand the speakers position in regard to the story (utterance) she is enouncing. For this, I will also introduce the *enunciative* modalities that are applied in order to understand relations between a speaker and a story.

The modalities of enunciation can be divided into two groups. In the first group, the subject of enunciation is not part of the world she is describing, but looks at it as an outsider, so the modality is about the truth and appearance of the state of affairs (*veridictory* modalities). For example stating “Politicians don’t listen to people anymore” shows that the speaker enounces the truth about politicians, even though it might be an illusion as well. The speaker therefore analyses politicians as an outsider and considers them from a different system than the one occupied by politicians themselves. The veridictory modalities answer to the question, whether the things are as they appear or not (truth, error, illusion, secret)?

The other type of enunciative modality is about the certainty of utterance, i.e. *epistemic* modality, where the subject of enunciation evaluates whether she is certain or in doubt about things in her world, i.e., evaluating certainty of a fact given by others. For example saying that “I am quite sure politicians don’t listen to people anymore” evaluates a fact given by others “politicians don’t listen to people anymore” but occupies a position in the same system with politicians, i.e., implying that she could actually somehow verify the fact. In short, veridictory modalities are about evaluating the security of a system outside the evaluator, while epistemic modalities are about the security of the system in evaluator’s world (Hodge & Kress 1988, 121–123). These modalities

depend on the communicative position in which the speaker image is placed in and are very helpful in reconstructing the speaker-image of a text. (Sulkunen & Törrönen 1997a, 55–57.)

All of the modalities are thought to create values for both the utterance itself (pragmatic modalities), and for the relation between the subject of enunciation and the utterance (enunciative modalities). Also the way in which the subject of the enunciation projects itself to the level of the utterance, i.e., *the speaker image*, creates value for the utterance and enunciation (Sulkunen & Törrönen 1997b, 121–123.) Enunciation has a foursome function, as it creates emotions, builds motivation for the addressee, creates contract of confidence between the text and addressee, and finally produces positive self-definition for the author. The speaker should not be interpreted as the genuine author of the text but as an implied author contained in the text itself, since sociological analysis cannot reach the true essence of the subjects, only how they appear in certain texts. (ibid., 122–130.) Every story or text is assumed to at least imply the speaker or the subject of enunciation in addition to the subject of the story. Therefore it consists of two stories, the story of the story (*énoncé énoncée*) and the story of the enunciation (*énonciation énoncée*) provided with a certain projection among these two. (ibid., 130–134.)

2.4 Split Subject Position of Young People

In the fifth chapter I will discuss the Youth Policy Program, and what kind of story of young people it draws. I will moderators and young people's opinions to this story in later chapters. It turns out to be helpful to analyse young people based socio-semiotic conceptualisations. They help in dividing young people's subject position into two different ideal types. This division both helps in understanding the meaning of INCH and in relating socio-semiotic theory with articulation theory. Namely, as I already mentioned, the Laclau's narration a dislocating discourse implies a splitting of a subject position. By using socio-semiotic methods, I will construct a division between young people during the analysis, and then show that in a certain sense, this splitting agrees to the one suggested by Laclau.

To give the reader an idea, how the socio-semiotic concepts are going to be used, I will shortly reveal the idea behind the division. I will call the *conformist young* the position, where young person starts to mimic the governmental discourse and draws a story on youth participation similar to the story written by the Government (the Youth Policy Program). All young people can express some sentences fitting this position, but they vary in how often these kinds of thoughts are brought forth. From this position a young person objectifies other young people defined by certain conformist discourses of politics, and sees her peers' good behaviour as a question of truth, which means that she feels distant about her fellow mates. Certainty of how the rules in the society work associate a conformist young to the 'side of the system'. The conformist young often uses exotactic modalities and describe constrains to other young people.

In the case opposite to the conformist young, the Government or INCH is seen more as the object, whose own nature can be enunciated veridictorily, and who should possibly be transformed but

where the governmental discourse is not mimicked. This endogenous position of young people is called the *indifferent young*, since it does not only act within the boundaries set by the conformist culture but tries to claim indifferent status in regard to conformism related to INCH and other forms of participation forms. The endogenous subject position of the indifferent young is better described by endotactic modalities, modalities describing the 'inner' values of a subject. Therefore, an *indifferent young* sees the young people as a real subjects and is indifferent to the conformist discourses treating young people from 'top-down' position. The values expressed by indifferent young people that concern her peers are subject to modal auxiliaries of certainty or uncertainty rather than those of truth.

These two positions can be interpreted as ideal types of young people, and they constitute opposite relations to the governmental discourse on INCH and participation. It is worth mentioning, that both of these ideal types act in two relations: a relation to abstract political debate, and in relation to concrete changes. Therefore one type can both act as a sender, and as a receiver in different stories. In fact, in order to understand the meaning of INCH, it is required to consider all of the four aspects, where these two ideal types act in two different positions. These issues will be discussed in section 7.6, where I draw together the analysis concerning young people.

The idea behind splitting of young people's relation to INCH did arise from Laclau's and Mouffe's articulation theory and from the metanarration described in the previous section. However, it is an empiric fact, that these splitting deriving from the ideal typical division and the splitting suggested by Laclau and Mouffe are interrelated and I will show that in chapter 7.

In this study, I am not interested as much in the discourses competing with the governmental discourse as I am interested in different positions in relation to the governmental 'truth'-discourse. Contrariwise to the division between active and dutiful citizen suggested by Bennett (2008, 15–19), the splitting therefore occurs from point of view of hegemonic discourse rather than as a consequence of two competing discourses. Young people are indifferent or conformist in relation to the governmental discourse, instead of any other discourse. Considering two different discourses would lead to at least four different ideal types or more complex combinations. A reason, why I think this division based on only one discourse is important, is that a certain set of discourses always leave a substantial portion of citizens indifferent to any of those discourses (occurring in political upper structure), and the divisions would not reach all people. It would diminish the possibilities of considering the social justice of the political order, while the social division (in relation to one discourse) would be left behind the political division (of multiple discourses). Furthermore, the fact that INCH is a governmentally organised service, the importance of governmental discourse surpasses any other discourses possibly important to its understanding. The restriction could however be seen as a restriction to this study, although I think that the research data I analysed supports this restriction.

2.5 Pragmatic Approach to Conceptualisation of Politics

I have used several concepts characterising political culture that are impossible to avoid. Political articulation is always subordinate to some hegemonic struggle claiming the position of universality and objectivity that cannot be circumvented by using concepts inherent to the particular hegemonic order. Since I feel need to relieve the reader from the indispensable discomfort induced by the socio- and politico-philosophical debates related to some of the concepts I am using in this analysis, I will now discuss these concepts in relation to previous sections. To purchase my way out from these issues, I take a rather pragmatic stand by defining the important concepts not universalistically, but as pragmatic weapons deriving from the socio-semiotic framework emphasizing the importance of narrations behind social action.

Concepts such as subject, object, actor, ideology, hegemony, and opposition or even antagonism are not regarded as essential entities constituted solely around some inner essential meaning to these terms. In the scope of this study they are produced in narrations that always produce at least one *subject* position within the story, but on the other hand the *subject* position of the narrator. Greimas' actantial model helps us to determine the positions of subjects, objects, helpers, opponents, senders, and receivers from narrations. An *actor* has its place on transitional sentences, i.e., in sentences that have a subject and an object (Hodge & Kress 1979, 7–10) and occupies a certain place (or places) in the actantial model derived from the narration.

By *politics* I mean rather loosely all action that is narrated as intentionally trying to affect others. Language usage constitutes several forms of ideologies both in the level of the structure of language, but also in the particular ways language is used. In every narration some phenomena are explicitly enunciated, while others are only implied or even non-existent. This can be done for example by transforming direct sentences to passive-form and eventually nominalising them, such as 'hearing of young people' instead of 'municipality hears young people' (ibid., 26–28).

By *hegemony* I refer to the cultural landscape constituting a certain set of prevailing ideologies claiming the status of universality, but restricting the possibilities of articulation by certain ideological forms. I take a quite positive stand by claiming that hegemony is never so well constituted it couldn't be at least partially explicated by studying language usage and characteristics of narrations. For example in the case of the Finnish political hegemony, typical forms are difficulties in articulation of oppositions in public debate. On the other hand, respect for law and order and obedience are all central to Finnish people (Stenius 2008), which was also seen among the respondents. It doesn't mean, that all citizens are non-violent and obedient to the law, but that illegal actions and violence are not considered as political articulations despite the fact that a few youth events have tried to cross this limitation (e.g. Smash ASEM²⁶).

²⁶ A demonstration occurring in September 2006 in Helsinki, which was feared to lead to illegal and violent behavior was resolved by massive mobilization of police forces leading to deconstruction of the 'political content' of the event. Therefore it was seen more as a selfish action of young people to be nurtured than recognized as political manifestation.

Under the order of the hegemonic discourse, such concepts, rather ‘empty’ as such, for example participation of young people, form *nodal points* (point de caption). Relieved from the burden of implying to what and in what forms one should participate, the emptied concepts of participation and hearing can be used to almost any kind of political intentions. In later chapters I will consider what particular meanings participation becomes associated with, and how it is related to the universality claim of the Finnish hegemony, which attempts to include all young people to the certain ‘Finnish cultural heritage’.

Finally, as I will show, some oppositions, although not openly expressed in INCH, do evolve among users of INCH, who try to exclude the possibility of using it by means not compatible with the hegemony of Finnish political culture. Concealed social divisions such as the one between young people and adults, which cannot be resolved in INCH due to restricted possibilities of dialogue and deliberation, remain hidden but can further strengthen the cultural peculiarities of the Finnish hegemony and create oppositions among young people themselves. An *antagonism* means the excluded opposition, which is always constituted by a hegemonic discourse in its promotion of certain narrations and exclusion of other narrations. The narration of young people in Finland, which is based on the idea of ‘bringing up good and conformist citizens’ rather than on really hearing them and considering them as equal part of the society, has been at least historically prevailing (Satka 2005). It leads to an antagonism that is tried to be resolved by legalist practices (hearing as a legal right) that are possible to articulate under the current political hegemony. Those opposing to act under the ‘conventional’ forms guaranteed by the legalist order are seen as the opponents to the object of ‘young people’s participation’ contributing to exclusion of them from the political debate occurring in INCH.

2.6 Methodological Criticism

I am interested in hermeneutically understanding INCH, i.e., helping to become conscious of certain aspects of INCH, interpreting it in a new light and showing how it builds political engagement of the youth. I hope the readers related to youth politics will make educated changes in their further actions according to the broadened conceptual perspective offered by the discursive approach combining social semiotic perspective. In this sense my approach comes close to sociological intervention, because I will reflect some practical problems of INCH that could be altered by the other actors around INCH as well (e.g. Sulkunen 1997, 18–22; Sulkunen 1994, 30–32; Touraine 1981, 191–222). This will become clear especially in the section 9.3, where I consider the possibilities of critical pedagogy in relation to INCH and young people’s political education.

Our position rises however certain problems. As Sulkunen (1997, 30–32) points out, sociological research can only use research material that is already carrying some meaning the researcher understands. After an interpretation a research produces again something meaningful, which circulates back to the world the researcher is studying but also a part of. This gives rise to the problem of reflexivity: how can one understand the unconscious nature of some discourses being part of the world herself? The meaning carried by signs has to be coded and decoded to transfer

the meaning. However, there is no universal theory of meaning that could be applied to understand this process.

Furthermore, critical social theory is often criticized for its self-proving claims of the status of the hegemony. In general, it has been criticized for its ontological assumptions that are simultaneously the claims of the theory (e.g. Heiskala 2000). I however try to avoid this problem by taking a more pragmatist stance on discourse theory and it works as a culturally produced narration, a guideline of the research. Namely, INCH belongs to the same culture with us and I try to say something scientifically meaningful about it without claiming it to be universally or trans-culturally valid interpretation²⁷.

²⁷ Sulkunen (1997, 48–50) overcomes this problem by not restricting himself to thinking that all sociality would be symbolic but by assuming existence of so called proto-semiotic facts. From pragmatic perspective it is not a problem as long as it is remembered that I am symbolically communicating in this study, and leave the interpretation to the reader.

3 *Research Data: A Long Description*

In this chapter I will describe the data I am analysing in later chapters. First I will begin from describing material I gathered from INCH's database. Then I will describe the Youth Policy Program, which I will analyse in the fifth chapter. After this I will describe the material collected from moderators I analyse in the sixth chapter. Finally I will consider the material collected from young people using or trying to use INCH, which is analysed in the seventh chapter. For all parts of the data I will consider, how the data was collected and how I handled it.

Except for the Youth Policy Program, all material is translated to English by the author, and especially the vocabulary important to the socio-semiotic approach is translated meticulously in order to avoid transforming the meaning of material.

As I already mentioned, the division of actors is problematic, and from socio-semiotic perspective actors are constructed in narrations rather than pre-existing essential entities. Therefore the actors of INCH could be divided to for example five groups (the Government, developers, moderators, users, and municipalities). However, in this study I have acquired data that could be interpreted as representing three of the actors. Therefore it is more exact to talk about the division of research data, since the different actors are constructed in the research data and reconstructed in my analysis.

3.1 *General Data Concerning Initiative Channel*

In the next chapter I consider INCH as a web portal, whose functioning is considered as a text and as a structure directing the possible ways of action people are can take. As I am one of the technical developer's of INCH, I know the functionality of it very well. Furthermore I support my knowledge with data collected from the database of INCH and from its website²⁸. Quantitative data describing registered users and ideas posted to INCH by 24th July 2009 are expressed in tables in Appendix 7.

To get an idea how INCH is actually used, I use data gathered from INCH's database. The data is used under permission by Ponsi Interactive Ltd such that all personified data was removed before the use. The data was gathered in 24th July 2009 and represents the situation of INCH at the time.

From this data I am quantitatively analyzing how actively the users of INCH use different aspects of the service. The data gathered from the user-database of INCH is an aggregate sample of all 1512 users registered in INCH by 24th July 2009. The data consists of several variables telling how many times and when the users have in, the number of ideas, comments, and votes different users have expressed, and how much text users have written. The data will be described in section 4.1. The data was analyzed using SPSS statistical software. Background variables such as age or

²⁸ <http://www.aloitekanava.fi/>

gender were missing in this data, since they are not mandatorily collected from registered users of INCH.

When I consider the actual content of INCH its aim is to relate the content to what is seen political and proper politics. It helps in drawing of the limits of political culture and the line between proper and non-proper political engagement. The ideas occurring in INCH before 24th July 2009 were typologised using Pierre Rosanvallon's (2008) conceptualisation of democratic engagement. The ideas were acquired from the database of INCH and I categorised them using qualitative analysis work suite Atlas.TI. There were total of 822 ideas consisting of both ideas publicly seen in INCH at the time (612) and those removed from INCH. Quantitative data concerning the coding is also expressed in Appendix 7 in tables 3 and 4.

In the fourth chapter I will also discuss the structural properties of INCH based on my own knowledge of the functioning of the site and the rules and guide²⁹ of INCH. These properties are going to be discursively analysed as texts structuring the space in which action is possible to be taken. I will analyse how structural properties affect the possibilities of using INCH and what kind of meanings can be associated with these properties.

3.2 The Youth Policy Program

In the fifth chapter I analyse background texts and especially *The Finnish Government's Child and Youth Policy Programme 2007–2011*³⁰ that state the objectives the Government is posing, while the civic educational aims are articulated. The administrative side of the creation of INCH is analysed in order to understand better how INCH became possible in the form it currently appears.

INCH was created as an answer to the municipalities' need to hear young people in matters concerning them, posed by the 8th article of the new Youth Act (72/2006)³¹, but also to answer the demands posed by the Youth Policy Program³². INCH refers to the Youth Act and the Youth Policy Program³³ on its guide³⁴. Also the Youth Policy Program and a commentary book on Youth Act (Aaltonen et al. 2009, 77) directly point to INCH as the yet the most successful ne example of how some of the Government's goals could be achieved. Although the 'top-down' perspective could be represented also by representatives of municipal administration, the main governmental contributor to the development of INCH outside Ponsi Interactive Ltd has been the

²⁹<http://www.aloitekanava.fi/opas/>, accessed 7th August 2009.

³⁰<http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2008/liitteet/opm21.pdf?lang=en>, accessed 25th March 2009.

³¹Youth Act (72/2006),
http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Nuoriso/nuorisopolitiikka/liitteet/HE_nuorisolaki_eng.pdf, accessed 25th March 2009.

³² *The Finnish Government's Child and Youth Policy Programme 2007–2011* is called the Youth Policy Program.

³³ The Youth Policy Program refers to *The Finnish Government's Child and Youth Policy Programme 2007–2011*

³⁴ INCH also states on its web site, that it tries to answer to the 8th article of the Youth Act as well as the Youth Policy Program. It states that "Aloitekanava.fi [INCH] responds to the 8 article of the new Youth Act that insists communities to offer adolescents possibilities to participate in local politics on issues concerning young people. Furthermore Aloitekanava.fi makes it possible for the communities to hear adolescents on the issues concerning them."
<http://www.aloitekanava.fi/opas/>, accessed 7th August 2009.

Ministry of Education and other governmental institutions behind the Youth Policy Program and the new Youth Act (2006/72). Also the commentary book on the Youth Act (Aaltonen et al. 2009) praises INCH for its multi-phase initiative creation process and possibilities to answer the 8 section of the Youth Act.

There is a variety of other governmental documents concerned about young people's participation and civic engagement, and these documents are not completely uniform, but they have substantial similarities concerning civic skills education and the methods, by which political participation levels are thought to be able to be elevated. Therefore, especially from the point of view of INCH, the speaker image in the Youth Policy Program gives a very good picture of the governmental position to INCH.

The Youth Policy Program consists of 129 pages and it was analysed by first coding it by Atlas.TI³⁵. Finally all the parts coded to be relevant to INCH were printed out and also coded on paper especially concentrating in the modalities of the text and actors it describes. The core of the analysis of the Youth Policy Program is thematically divided in the themes found in the Youth Policy Program (section 5.3). Furthermore it is analysed by using the socio-semiotic approach in similar manner as young people's and moderators' opinions in later chapters.

3.3 Data Collected from Moderators

As a next part of the research data, I use the moderators' point of view. The data consists of three different parts but they all represent moderators' perspectives on similar issues. This part of the data is going to be analyzed in the sixth chapter. Basic quantitative description of respondents is included in tables in the Appendix 6.

First part of the data is collected by an online form, which was sent to all moderators of INCH by e-mail. 16 moderators out of 91 answered to the form, and although it is not statistically representative sample, it gives a rather dense description of different qualitative aspects of moderators concerns and narrations about INCH and youth politics. The online form is shown in appendix 1.

The e-mail was sent to the moderators by National Coordination and Development Centre of Youth Information and Counselling Services (YICS) in the end of May 2006. In the covering letter it was emphasized that answering is voluntary and that the answers are confidential in order to avoid biased answers, but also to guarantee the moderators own rights and that the research is ethically sound. The questions were expressed as neutral as possible in order to not direct their answers to any certain direction.

The second part of the data collected from moderators consists of a semi-structured thematic interview of two moderators. The interview was based on same questions and themes used in the online form, and the interview was performed also in order to test the questions of the online

³⁵ Atlas.TI is a computer program, which helps in qualitative data analysis.

form. The interviewees were given the same covering letter as the online form respondents shown in Appendix 1, and the same background information and quantitative data was collected with a separate information form from the interviewees. The questions to which the thematic interview was based on are expressed in Appendix 2. Although an interview as a data gathering method differs from an online form, the answers were substantially similar and the settings were made as uniform as possible to guarantee the compatibility of the answers.

The moderators, who answered to the form or who were interviewed, are each given a single identification code. In order to guarantee the confidentiality of the interviews, the interviewees and online form responses were not separated in the analysis. The code is of the form M[F/M][age], where M denotes moderator, and second letter F female or M male. If several respondents have the same code, they are further equipped with lower case alphabets in order to distinct different respondents. The ages are varied a little in order to guarantee the confidentiality of different responses.

I also collected notes on the developmental day of INCH in 24th March 2009, where one user, several moderators and developers as well as one person representing the YICS participated and discussed about the future development of INCH. All participants gave an approval to use the notes in this study. I was mainly interested in the moderators' account on what kind of situations has occurred, while they have encountered with young people. This data reveals how moderators understand the role of INCH and democracy in general, and what implications these have for the civic educational perspective. The moderators comments expressed in the developmental day are coded by MDFX, where X denotes a unique identification number for each moderator quoted. The ages of these moderators cannot be expressed, since they were not collected. All participating moderators were female (F).

Both the material from the developmental day and moderators responses and interviews were coded using Atlas.TI and the most important parts were analyzed again on paper by printing them out. In the coding, attention was paid especially on the actors the moderators are attributing and on the modalities in their descriptions of different actors.

The data collected by the online form gives a rather uniform account, which supports the centrality of the themes found by this form. The moderators own conception of what they are required to think about INCH might have biased the answers, although I highlighted the importance of honest answers. Especially in the interviews and the online form responses, the moderators were in a position of a specialist telling about the challenges they confront in their work as moderators. However, these kinds of representations would contribute to their action as moderators as well, so from sociological perspective it wouldn't be a real problem. Instead it reveals their account on what they think they are required to say about INCH, while they are acting in an official position, which is one of the research interests of this study. I also told them my young age which puts me in a position of being in the target group myself in order to avoid too much consideration and biasing the answers towards justifying their own opinions for other specialists.

Furthermore, I was taking notes in the developmental days of INCH, where the moderators were mainly discussing together in non-research related manner. The issues and enunciation were compatible to other data supporting its validity.

3.4 Data Collected from Young People

The final part of my data consists of data collected from both the users and young people trying to use INCH. This data is analyzed in the seventh chapter. Basic quantitative description of respondents is included in tables in the Appendix 5.

First, I collected data with an online form, which was linked to a note of the research study shown to all users of INCH who logged in between the May 25th and the July 16th 2009. The note was expressed on INCH's web site with a permission of YICS³⁶ coordinating INCH currently. Out of 126 users who saw the note 17 gave an answer. Although these interviews and form-answers don't represent all users' opinions, they represent the opinions of young people, who were interested enough in the service so that they answered on the form. The data therefore represents quite well the positions of young people substantially inspired of INCH or its development. The form together with its covering letter is shown in Appendix 3. Of the 17 online form respondents, 9 had used INCH for a period longer than 1 month and 8 of them had registered recently and were trying to use INCH. Therefore it covers both the groups using INCH and those interested in familiarizing with INCH. Second, I collected data by thematic interview of one young person having used INCH for a period of 12 months, and one young person who was new to INCH and tried to use it. The interviews were based on same questions as the online and background information together with some quantitative data, similar to the online form data, was collected by a separate form from interviewees. The questions to which the interviews were based on are expressed in Appendix 4.

Young people's online answers were gathered in summer 2009, when most young people were on a vacation from schools. The users answering to the form were therefore interested in using the service not only because of school made them to. It is possible that the young people responding to the form or participating in an interview tried to convince me about the appropriateness of their relation to INCH and politics. Therefore their answers might differ from what they tell their peers although I tried to tell them not to say what they think they are expected to. Even if their answers were biased to the 'appropriate' direction, it would further imply that they would be considering INCH as a channel, where they have to behave 'appropriately'. As I am comparing young people's ability to relate to such expectations, it is not problematic for this study. Therefore, despite my position as a researcher, the data shows clearly the differences but also the general compatibility of the narrations typical to users of INCH.

³⁶ National Coordination and Development Centre of Youth Information and Counselling Services
<http://www.nettinappi.fi/kansallinenkoordinointi/coordination.html>, accessed 6th August 2009.

The young people, who answered to the form or who were interviewed are each given a single identification code in similar manner as to moderators. In order to guarantee the confidentiality of the answers, the interviewees and online form respondents are not specified. In the analysis a code denoting a user is of the form Y[N/O][F/M/X][age], where Y denotes young person, N a new user, O user using the service for at least one month, F female, M male, and X unknown. If several respondents have the same code, it is further equipped with lower case alphabets in order to distinct different respondents. The ages are varied a little in order to guarantee the confidentiality of different responses. When I quote the responses, the quotations are edited when needed, to avoid the possibility of identifying single respondents. Modifications I made are denoted with square-brackets.

All respondents were told in the covering letter that their answers are confidential, and also that they could affect future development of INCH, which is justified because I will use the data in further development of INCH. Also the voluntary nature of participating in the research was emphasized. The cautions were taken in order to answer to the role of ethics that has become central aspect of social research recently (e.g. Kuula 2006). Because young people are not as independent as adults many cautions were taken (ibid., 149–150). The contact was based on young people's voluntary contact to me after reading the research note. The identities of respondents were never asked, but background information such as age, gender, and municipality were asked. This gave them possibility to participate in the research not fearing what their parents might think.

I coded young people's interviews and online-form responses using Atlas.TI paying attention to actors and modalities important to the socio-semiotic method. Furthermore, I classified the answers based on variables derived from factorial analysis of value questions measured on likert-scale³⁷. I paid attention to the compatibility of the answers within two groups based on interest in using INCH and faith in its possibilities. I also compared the answers of members in these two different groups.

3.5 Discussion on Data Concerning Young People and Moderators

It is worth noting that the form of the interviews, online-form data, and the comments expressed in the developmental day differ significantly from the form of the governmental policy document. They are not trying to establish a singular position or speaker image but they rather form a collage of utterances that has to be analysed as a socially produced formation with no single subject. Therefore the method is going to differ slightly in that the speaker image is not assumed to be as well formed but multitude, while in the case of the Youth Policy Program the speaker image is assumed to be singular. However, consideration of different modalities is possible, and if the moderators or young people don't form a single story about young people's participation, their action can be contrasted to the story described in the Youth Policy Program.

³⁷ Part 4 in Appendix 3. The factorial analysis is considered in the seventh chapter, and shown in table 5 in appendix 6.

The thematic interviews are always subjective, and interviewer's subjective position necessarily affects both the interview and the interviewee. While interviewing different actors, I tried to be conscious of my own position and for the sake of interviewees I was trying to give reasonable residual. I didn't express any strong position and views myself, but I tried to give the interviewees possibility to express themselves and their own point of views without dismissing them. I tried to give them a good and unbroken but positive feeling of participating in the research. This approach is compatible with other studies on issues of reflectivity and ethics in social research (e.g. Oinas 2004, Pösö 2006, Roberts 2003, Smyth & Mitchell 2008).

The use of online forms in social research has not been much praised (Wright 2005; Sax & Gilmartin & Lee & Hagedorn 2008). This is due to the fact that people are very unevenly interested in answering this kind of forms and have also an uneven access to them. However, in this study I am studying INCH, which is already on the web, and people interested in using it have the possibilities and willingness to use web-based applications. In fact, a web-based form is quite reasonable form of data gathering concerning people in the core group of users of a certain web portal.

PART II

Analysis

4 Initiative Channel: Structure and Use as an Application

In this chapter I concentrate on INCH as an application. I will analyze the user data collected from INCH's database. Then I will discuss how the structure of INCH works as a text structuring its use. I will support my argument by categorizing the ideas into three categories reflecting certain ideal types. I will further interpret the structural properties of INCH. Finally I will discuss the possibilities how INCH could be enhanced as an application, and what is its current status in municipal democracy.

4.1 The Using of Initiative Channel

I will now consider how INCH is used based on quantitative data gathered from the user database. A registration is required before being able to express ideas, comment, or vote, but it is not required for reading existing content. However, it is possible that most people visiting INCH's website never register although I concentrate on the registered users. The data I consider in this section is also expressed in table 1 and 2 in Appendix 7.

A half of the registered users have ever posted anything (an idea, a comment, or a vote) to INCH. The other half usually logs into the system only once, and most of the users who have posted something, have logged in at least twice. About half of the people, who have ever done anything, have logged in only during a period of less than 2 weeks, and only about 23 % (346 users) of registered people have logged in during a period longer than two weeks. Two weeks is the time in which it is even theoretically possible to follow-up the whole process of one idea from commenting phase to the following section provided that the commenting phase is ending when the user first logs in. These users using the service for a period of at least two weeks, are quite active, 65 % of them have logged in at least 4 times, and they usually start using the service for longer periods. They also engage by expressing ideas or comments quite actively, and the correlation of number of postings with the number of logins is quite high (0,478). However, even in this group, 210 of the users hadn't logged in during 3 months period before the analysis, and only 171 users had. It seems that even if a person gets involved with INCH, it doesn't hook them up very well, but about 60 % of them lose the interest in the service even after they have used it for some time.

According to these figures, a large amount of young people hearing about and visiting INCH never start to use it even after registering, and only a small percentage becomes really engaged with the service. Of about 900 ideas posted in INCH, only 14 have succeeded in a way that they have been marked as success stories by moderators. However, it has to be remembered that INCH also provides a channel for young people to have their ideas expressed even without not really engaging with the service but only using it once. Active engagement shouldn't be seen as the only goal of the service, but it provides a potential channel for all young people in participating municipalities.

It is interesting however to see, what kind of young people become the active users. According to many moderators, users are generally quite skilled in regard to computers, which would support the digital divide hypothesis, stating that high technology based democracy opportunities close out certain groups of people, if not by force, at least because of different expectations and values, different groups possess. Another interesting thing is, how young people actively using the service relate to the governmental subject position of young people I will consider in the next chapter. They turn out to affect the chances of occasional or potential users as well.

4.2 Initiative Channel as a Text

Computer science is a rather new discipline, but it shapes the social world increasingly. The technological developers have often a lot of power and make societal conceptions central to the creation of spaces (e.g. Heiskanen 2004; Tiainen 2004). For example gender issues are not often taken into account, and most of technological developers are males (Korvajärvi 2004; Vehviläinen 2004). However, technology creates new forms of control and commitment, even faster than sociological research can keep pace with.

In Finnish information technology training, the usability issues have started to be taken seriously only during last decades. Deeper social issues are mainly lacking from the education, while usability is mostly about how to pleasure users most. For example, the issues concerning user identities and registration are often considered only from the point of view of 'authenticity' of users. It mainly concerns how to guarantee, that there are 'real persons behind the statements' that could at least in some cases be identified, should there occur any problems. Any deeper social aspects what this 'authenticity' means are forgotten. However, the structure of technological spaces can be treated as a text, folding together different discourses telling about hidden presumptions and utterance inherent to the cultural landscape.

The case of INCH is not an exception. With a small group of people, it is not possible to create a system that takes into account all the modern theories of democracy, the social needs of youth work etc. With more broad consciousness techno-enthusiasm and other cultural biases could however be altered, although different interests and discourses are always more or less compromised. Even without taking a Latourian stand suggesting that non-human technologies can be taken as independent actors, technologies shape the action through certain boundary conditions

representing different kinds of modalities. INCH can be related to discourses dominating Finnish political culture and analysed from the perspective of modalities valuing different types of action. I will consider this aspect later in section 4.4 of this chapter. To support my claims, I will first consider how the structure of INCH directs its use in the different types of ideas expressed in INCH. This will be considered in next section.

There has been a lot of discussion about digital divide and how digital democracy closes out a broad amount of people not being in a position to be technically, economically, or socially able to participate using the digital devices (e.g. Norris 2001; Sassi 2000, 177). Finland as a “knowledge society” has put lot of effort into providing all citizens technical and economic possibilities to participate on the Internet. However, many of the social aspects have been left out, and this seems to be a problem for INCH. Although the system is developed to be user friendly and easy to use without broad technical skills, it seems that the active users of INCH possess technical skills that outweigh the average. In this sense it works clearly more as a civic educational goal defining who and what kind of people can speak in the Finnish knowledge society instead of equally giving all young people changes to articulate their needs. However, the inequality caused by a variation in technical skills turns out not to be the only form of inequality involved with INCH.

4.3 Typologisation of Ideas and the Ways of Using Initiative Channel

Structural view of politics is central to the Finnish discourses on politics and administration (e.g. Saukkonen 2003, Pekonen 2003). Also the creation of INCH has been based on idea of structuring action of its users rather rigidly in order to direct its use compatible with certain pre-existing expectations instead of giving its users the power to use it with some non-predestined ways. The process of INCH structures possible ways of its use and supports mainly creation of initiatives concerning rather particular issues.

From a systemic perspective such as the Easton’s (1965) input-output-model, politics is about issues, whereas the values are only immanent to the shape of the system. In reality, production of political values is much more complex than what can be interpreted solely from structural perspective. If INCH is analysed as a political system, the input-element consists of the normal users, who attribute their demands and interests sent to the system. The moderators as well as the other users appear as the gate-keepers, who send some of the demands and initiatives to other levels, where the actual decision-making takes place, usually municipal bureaus (conversion). The initiatives send forward may then have an output in forms of budgets etc. that can have an outcome, which in turn can affect young people by giving them positive or negative feedback. Of course, the users also act as gate-keepers, because they can vote for the others ideas and make them not go through to the throughput phase. In contrast, I am going to study especially the phenomena of INCH that could be labeled as the culture.

The principal idea behind the creation of the process of Initiative Channel is that the interest in politics would solely be based on the positive feedback resulting from successful initiatives³⁸. This view is rather compatible with the Eastonian systemic perspective. It restricts the purpose of INCH mainly to ideas trying to influence in specific issues contrasted to the so called ideas of participation and expression. In order to show that the analysis of INCH as an initiative creation system is inadequate, I am shortly going to classify ideas expressed in INCH using a typology of democratic engagement expressed by Pierre Rosanvallon (2008). The actual numbers of ideas of different types are expressed in table 3 in Appendix 7. Some further information of these types is also expressed in table 4 in Appendix 7 based on the way I coded all the 822 ideas expressed in INCH.

According to Rosanvallon (2008, 34–35) the first type of democratic engagement is direct influence to specific issues. It is built up from different forms of collective action that endeavor certain results. The second type of democracy is the democracy of participation. It consists of the means by which citizens come together and create relationships in order to create a shared world. A third type is the democracy of expression, which is based on acting as the voice of the society, expressing collective feelings, and evaluating decision-makers and expression of demands. Using this threefold division, the ideas in INCH can be divided into three different ideal types although in practice, every idea represents more than one of these types, even if one of them dominates the others. I am later using this division in order to understand moderators' and users' relations to different type of content.

The first group of ideas consists of the 628 (77 %) ideas involving and trying to influence to specific issues. As I will show in chapters 6 and 7, they are the ideas most praised by different actors of INCH and have the most visible results at least, if the municipal administration takes these ideas seriously. If an idea in this class succeeds it mainly results in material changes or changes in certain institutional practices. These ideas can succeed under INCH's own discourse, which possesses a category for success stories in INCH. About 4 % of these ideas have turned into success stories (table 4 in Appendix 7). These ideas range from some specific practical school issues, like getting new benches or getting better school food, to some larger issues such that extension of the age limit for children's bus tickets or getting street lights, or better swimming areas. Many of these kinds of ideas have succeeded. Larger issues seem to succeed better in smaller municipalities. However such more 'political ideas' such as making it voluntary to study Swedish language in school are not very successful, and often not even sent anywhere. They are not possible to deal with on the local level and would require strong political subjectivity to accomplish. Therefore for example the one concerning studying Swedish was taken by moderators as an "opinion" rather than an "initiative".

³⁸ This has come out in discussions with developers, although it is not in the focus of my analysis.

The second group of ideas consists of the 135 (16 %) ideas of participation. They are the ideas that try to bring young people together instead of trying to affect to specific issues. These ideas often overlap with the category of ideas of direct influence. For example an idea suggesting a fashion camp to be arranged by the municipality is trying to influence to some specific institutional practices but also tries to bring people together. About 9 % of ideas of participation have turned out as success stories and all of them could be interpreted as ideas of direct influence as well. Many of these kinds of ideas have been expressed, but only the ones that have been admired by the moderators have succeeded. For example with help of INCH, a rock choir was founded, some school girls got a summer camp where they could discuss fashion and style issues, and some people wanted to have a meeting where they could connect their computers (LAN). However, the ideas of participation that don't fit to regular youth work and that cannot be accomplished by moderators or municipal administration, (for example arranging a political demonstration) seem to fail because of lack of interest and because the process of INCH doesn't allow free discussion.

A third group of ideas consists of the 59 (7 %) ideas of expression that don't really have to affect anything or even bring people together. Instead those ideas represent some expression by young people. The main purpose of these kinds of ideas is not to affect any particular thing or practice, or bring people together, but to lead to changes in social and political valuations. These ideas are central to expressing certain values, i.e., they are keen to building political culture. For example some jokes, such as the idea of a TV-character becoming the president, which was expressed several times and received very high number of comments (46 comments), are expressions that can have various interpretations, but however express the voice of the young people most deeply. Not a single idea of expression has turned into a success story. 60 % of the ideas in this group have expressed a form of social control. In other words, they usually address how other people should behave. This reflects the Stenius (1997, 168–170) argument of the prevalence of strong social control in Finland and shows that social control has an important place in INCH too. As I will show, the most active users of INCH and the most of the moderators don't understand how to interpret this kind of ideas, but they are rather labeled as harmful or at least useless for INCH.

The typologisation divides ideas to three ideal types, and in any particular case ideas represent all different types. Also the surface of the idea has to be separated from the implied message deriving from it as a performance. Namely, an idea trying to affect to a specific issue at the same time enounces that politics trying to affect things at the local level rather incrementally are somewhat positive. Therefore it is also an expression. Also, since the value of INCH as such is about young people's participation (although rather obscurely), each idea has the component of participation at least in the process of INCH. The ideas of participation however rather refer to suggestion of participatory forms on the surface or the utterance of the idea rather than on the level of its enunciation. Similarly, the ideas of expression are ideas that are enouncing some value about the political culture, and not just implying it from the performative perspective.

4.4 Discursive Perspective to the Structure of Initiative Channel

There are several forms of control made possible by the structure of INCH as an application. I will discuss these properties in this section. The structure of INCH and the control exercised by different actors turn out to determine the using of INCH rather strongly. Only a small minority of ideas are ideas of expression have been expressed let alone become popular. Also, the ideas of participation seem to be in minority and separate from any ‘political concept’ such as assembling a demonstration for example.

INCH is a channel for creating initiatives. This sends a clear message, as interviews of young people confirmed: the users see the creation of initiatives the main purpose of INCH. This can be contrasted with political debating and discussion about values or larger issues. The initiatives are divided into five categories: “Hobbies and free-time”, “Local area”, “School and studying”, “Well-being and health”, and “Other subjects”. Although I won’t consider these categories more thoroughly, it is evident that they guide how young people use the service and direct the valuation of different issues concerned ‘political’ or possible to change in INCH. The quantitative amounts of ideas in these categories and in relation to previous typology of three species are expressed in table 3 in Appendix 7³⁹.

The first structural aspect of INCH, which can be linked to the shaping of the Finnish political culture is the requirement of registering, although only the e-mail address of the user is verified. Behind the decision to require registration there has been the ‘authenticity’ argument that the information would be more credible and ‘authentic’ if users had to register. It is also assumed that this registration would guarantee that there are real people with real e-mail addresses behind initiatives, and this restriction would also prevent some of the inappropriate content, although many users and moderators have suggested the possibility to express thoughts anonymously without any kind of registration⁴⁰. The question about the ‘authenticity’ of the people using INCH and ‘trueness’ of their accounts can be related to the Finnish political discourse emphasizing the truth and ‘authenticity’ based on administrative inclusion by registration (Stenius 1997, 170; Stenius 2008, 43–45). Finland was the only Nordic country whose legislation required the ‘free’ associations to be registered and their rules to be accepted by the state, even though it was labelled as legislation *for* the freedom of associations (Stenius 1987, 374–375). Despite the justification of this legislation as a guarantor of freedom, it didn’t guarantee freedom in any liberalist sense, but in it guaranteed it only the Finnish ‘authenticity’ and the universality principles of inclusion.

Registration is a restriction taken to be able to count users (inclusion), but also to prevent inappropriate content, although marketed by rights derived from registration, such as the possibility of electric signature. It could also prevent freedom of expressing thoughts not fitting the conformist culture. Although this prevention doesn’t appear as a strict norm (only a valid e-mail address is

³⁹ The results show that these categories direct the ways in which ideas are expressed in relation to the typology of ideas expressed in the previous section.

⁴⁰ This point has become clear in discussions with developers.

required), the message it sends is clear: whatever you say is possible to trace back to a certain person, so you should not even *want* to express anything too inappropriate. On the enunciative level it implies that true democratic opinion is not one evaluated solely on the basis of its content, but whether it is enounced from an 'authentic' position.

The possibilities of deliberation in INCH are narrow (restrictions in commenting, no discussion forums etc.) in relation to many other foreign projects addressing civic participation and education online (e.g. Wiklund 2005, 712–715). As I already mentioned, Stenius (2008, 43–46) points out horizontal communication hasn't been dominant in the Finnish peasant culture. Instead with legislation, such as the one concerning freedom of associations and the hegemonic culture as well, has made horizontal communication both very limited in its existence and in its appreciation. Inappropriate content as an object of prevention shows a strong appreciation of cultural hegemony, which sees people unable to judge the content themselves. Instead it enounces that they should be helped with preventive methods in order that people would not have to filter the inappropriate (political) content themselves. These structural limitations could also prevent occurrence of many forms of critical deliberation that could lead to more extensive changes in political culture 'bottom-up'. At the same time young people using the service are silently taught that many restrictions are in the interest of all and to disrespect deliberative discussion. It is then not surprising that even many users opt to discuss 'real political issues' in other Internet portals better suited to open deliberation.

A third interesting aspect of the structure of INCH is the voting phase. The idea is to emphasize voting as a corner stone of democratic system in a civic educational sense. Voting could ideally put pressure on some municipality if an initiative was supported by a large amount of young people. For this, the electronic signatures of the supporters of the initiative would be enough and work as an address. However, so far it seems that voting doesn't substantially bring anything more to the initiative in positive sense. In fact, it seems that it works democratically only in negative sense by filtering, which initiatives are sent to other institutions. Although it doesn't empower young people very well, because of absence of large amount of users, it gives a picture of what kind of ideas are not supported by others and should be ignored before even considered as real municipal initiatives. This point is further emphasized by one user as she claimed other people to be "teasing" by voting against other's ideas (YOX14).

Because of the filtering of bad or non-supported ideas, INCH teaches young people two lessons. It teaches that 'good ideas' are the ideas that have got wide positive but only a tiny negative support by others. This emphasizes the importance of public interest over private interest, which is more dominant in liberalist views of democracy although the idea of initiatives originally derives from the libertarian discourse. It also teaches that filtering ideas on early level, before they go to the higher levels of public administration is desirable, because individual young people are subordinate to municipal clerks and the effectiveness of the administrative system is more important than individually driven political ambitions. Even if INCH tries to respond to the need of more

individual civic engagement, that used to be undermined by associations and other instances possessing official mantra, it emphasizes that initiatives coming from only one or few people, or opposed by many, should not be even dealt with. The inexistence of the concept of opposition and the lack of understanding minor subcultures or individual ambitions in Nordic political cultures enters INCH at last in the voting phase (cf. Stenius 2008, 171).

Finally, the process in which ideas are turned into initiatives consists of several phases, which takes at least a month before an idea is sent further. On one hand, it has been pointed out by moderators that young people are too short-tempered to be interested in the process of several phases. On the other hand, they might just feel that there is no need for separating the phases and lose their interest. The idea of the multi-phase process arises from practices typical to official assemblies. The decision not to collect the votes, comments, and the signatures all at once implies not only a consecutive structuration of the process, but it also teaches young people to be patient, while dealing with public administration. In fact, moderators raised this lesson as one of the objectives in education related to INCH.

In conclusion, INCH seems to contain a *hidden curriculum* teaching that democratic actors have to be authentic and accepted by registration, so that all opinions could be traced back by administration. It teaches that horizontal communication is not as important (restricted commenting possibilities) as the communication in vertical relations between citizens and the administration (initiatives). In addition, it teaches that a good form of democracy is not based on individual voices but on common expression, so that only a positive support from majority of participants justifies an idea to be sent further. Furthermore, ideas should be filtered by community even before sending them to municipal administration in order to avoid bothering civil servants. Finally, it teaches that young people should be patient while dealing with public administration instead of opposing and possibly even changing how administration works.

If INCH is analysed as enunciating something in itself, or by anybody who takes it as a substantial solution of youth engagement, she gives a subject position for young people that is characterised by requirement of the hidden curriculum above. INCH then gives the abilities for this kind of action. Young person as a subject is hoped to be willing to participate using INCH under these normative values, and provided with the know-how through school and other education given by youth workers.

The end buyer of INCH is a single municipality and thus INCH is one of the things what the municipality is trying to say to its young inhabitants, especially if no other new forms of youth empowerment have been taken into use since the new Youth Act (2006/72). INCH could therefore be analysed as a text and enunciation from the side of the municipality. In many municipalities it turns out that young people are not taken as sovereign actors in municipal democracy. However, the municipality's message claims that INCH substantially fulfils the requirement of new Youth Act to hear young citizens without actually doing it. From this perspective the enunciation would

be about making something appear that is not, making the hearing of young people an illusion. The other possibility however is that hearing of young people doesn't really mean anything.

In comparison to Paakkunainen's (2005a) study I discussed in section 1.5, INCH represents rather contrary values than most young people possess nowadays. It doesn't offer chances for discussion about world politics, learning from others, or combining values. It doesn't offer chances for very deep identity formation, or give any chances of supporting the global justice movement. What makes the Internet an important environment for young people's political action is mainly lacking in INCH. Other studies have shown, that in Finland as well as in many other countries, demonstrations and other more 'radical' and less 'conformist' forms of political activity have indeed increased in popularity, in particular those concerning global justice or environmental issues.

4.5 A Channel for Local Democracy or Municipal Customership?

Municipal democracy is an important theme on its own, which only recently has acquired more attention in Finland (cf. Rättilä 2001). Therefore, treating young people as active participants in municipal democracy is an important issue both from civic educational and democratic perspectives. However, municipal democracy, even if it is of only one of the things that young people⁴¹ are interested in, it should not be in the only form of democracy given to them, if they are seen as real political subjects, although the importance of local politics has been central to the Finnish cultural regime (Stenius 2008, 10–11). Local politics could also be understood in a wider sense, as many problems young people confront are local and everyday problems, whose solutions would require a national approach. As Rättilä (2001, 191) points out, municipal activity is not politically or ideologically engaged, but tries to consciously act outside political divisions. The fact that INCH is restricted solely on the local level implies an assumption that young people are incapable of articulating comprehensive political programs and of taking care of the system itself. This incapability is not even tried to be resolved by educational support. This raises the question what kind of citizenship the norms and practices of INCH are constructing (cf. *ibid.*, 193)? INCH is a solution to the demand of individual access to public politics. At the same time it doesn't really change the tradition that more extensive empowerment and politics on large issues, 'large politics' still presupposes some official mandate based on conformist ideology manifested in the unwritten norm of delegated empowerment (*ibid.*, 198).

Currently INCH fits the idea of seeing inhabitants of municipalities as clients or customers (*ibid.*, 202–203) typical to the new administrative paradigms that have spread out around the Finnish administration since the 1980's (Heiskala & Luhtakallio, edit., 2006; Rantala & Sulkunen, edit., 2006). In comparison to open discussion forums on the Internet, INCH directs action towards issues small enough to be handled in the municipal institutions. This gives a certain lesson for young people of what democracy is about. It gives rise to the question, whether people are dis-

⁴¹ It seems that young people are concerned about much wider issues as well as the local issues. I will come back to this in the chapter I consider what young people really want.

interested in politics, because they don't have the means (such as INCH) to deal with 'small politics', or that they are deprived from the possibility of 'large politics' or radical democracy, the politics of self-willing people willing to go to the roots of the system and political values. In this sense the municipality can be seen as a corporation serving some certain services to its clients (inhabitants) and offering them a certain feedback mechanism, such as INCH. The silence of people could then be interpreted as activism against this sort of role attributed to the citizen.

A recent report by the Ministry of Justice (2009) that categorises E-democracy into three different categories: consultation, empowerment, and participation. Because the empowerment of INCH works negatively in voting phase and because deliberative participation is restricted, INCH is addressing mainly the consultation category, whilst the participatory forms of democracy are better represented by more open discussion groups, chats, and blogs. Consultation aspects however don't really depend as much on the structure of INCH as on the municipal institutions' will to take the ideas seriously.

Even for INCH to substantially address the demand of consultation some sort of political pressure would be required. This political pressure for it would have to arise among young people. In order to accomplish this INCH could be organised as a machine, where really open discussion on ideas would be possible. The support of ideas should also be based on positive rather than negative empowerment. Even if the first initiatives didn't get responses, possibly active use of the channel would make the municipalities to receive an increasing amount of initiatives, which would give them political pressure to take the initiatives and ultimately young people more seriously. Therefore the possibility of totally anonymous use of the channel could provide the possibility of generating more pressure.

In sum, to conclude I have problematized several properties of INCH. In next four chapters I will analyse INCH not so much as an application but as a social phenomenon. I will relate the social aspects of it to these structural properties. As I drew a preliminary hidden curriculum of INCH in this chapter, the next chapter will shed light on the Governments hidden curriculum of INCH. In other words, the hidden curriculum expressed in this chapter is going to get faces in the following chapter.

5 The Youth Policy Program: A Hidden Curriculum of Initiative Channel

In this chapter, I will consider INCH mainly from the point of view of the Government. I am going to analyse how the problem of democracy is seen, and what are the governmental objectives, as well as the problems the Government tries to solve, while funding and supporting the development of INCH. I will apply an actantial narratological model to analyze the subject position of young people imposed by the government (cf. Korhonen & Oksanen 1997; Sulkunen & Törrönen 1997a, 47). Finally, I will discuss some further schemes from which these narrations are rising comparing them to for example Laclau's metanarration of discursive formation (Torfing 2005, 14–17).

In administrative discourses democracy is interpreted as being in crisis and solutions to this crisis are explored. I will show in this chapter, the Finnish Government is trying to solve this problem by means of education. These hermeneutic perspectives give us an insight to the perspective from which the Government's account on civic engagement behind INCH is based on. In later chapters it will be related to the moderators and young people's own accounts in order to grasp the subject position ascribed to young people. I don't claim that the Finnish Government is a well established uniform subject, but this position is going to be derived from the Youth Policy Program⁴², which suitably represents the account. I try to discover a narration that explains what is the struggle over democracy about and what kind of values are brought about by studying the discursive elements found in the Youth Policy Program.

The governmental account expressed in this chapter represents the 'top-down' point of view to the democratic engagement and civic education. It can be related to the hidden curriculum I discussed in section 4.4. Other accounts have named this perspective as the "managed" perspective (Coleman 2008), which reveals the position of "dutiful citizen". In other words it emphasizes a point of view seeing citizenship and participation as a duty (Bennett 2008). These discourses are the ones that are labelled as administrative discourses aiming at creating channels for empowering dialogue between the citizens and the politicians in order to rationalize the political participation (Häyhtiö & Rinne 2006, 2; Rättälä 2001).

5.1 Documents behind the Creation of Initiative Channel

There are a couple of important governmental texts concerning issues behind the creation of Initiative Channel. In this chapter the governmental position to INCH is going to be interpreted as the speaker image of these documents. I will now describe them and their relation to INCH.

The new Youth Act (72/2006), which concerns adolescents under 29 years old, took effect on March 1st 2006. The 8 section of the Youth Act states:

⁴² <http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2008/liitteet/opm21.pdf?lang=en>, accessed 25h March 2009

Young people's participation

Young people must be given opportunities to take part in the handling of matters concerning local and regional youth work and youth policy. Further, young people shall be heard in matters concerning them.⁴³

Young people should be able to participate in policy-making concerning them. While it addresses the right of young people to be heard in matters concerning them, it doesn't state any particular levels of decision-making that the right of participation concerns. The national level of politics seems to be left out in enforcing participatory politics among adolescents, although the part stressing the need for hearing young people in matters concerning them doesn't explicitly state that it should happen on local or regional level only⁴⁴.

The Youth Act wasn't prepared by any single group, and the chairman of the group stated: "We can conclude that the contemporary method of law-drafting is transparent, open discussion" (Aaltonen et al. 2009, 11). However, it is interesting that no representatives of young people took part in the law-drafting process, given that the Youth Act itself states that young people themselves should be given an opportunity to take part in youth policy drafting. Allianssi and Youth Research Network, who were heard in the law-drafting process, represent youth workers and youth researchers, i.e., professional authority over young people.

The goal of the service has been to accomplish some of the aims of the Youth Policy Program⁴⁵, which was accepted by the Finnish Government in 2007.⁴⁶ The responsibility of the preparation was given to the Youth Policy Division of the Department for Cultural, Sport and Youth Policy in the Ministry of Education in co-operation with other ministries. Young people themselves were able to comment the proposal and some changes were made before the policy program was accepted. However, the young people participating in the commenting were members of youth councils and thus representing the administrative side of young people's perspective.

The Youth Policy Program as well as the Youth Act was partly adopted because of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child⁴⁷. One of the things I am going to deal with in this chapter, is how the concept of democracy changes and what kind of modal valuations get associated with it, when it enters the Finnish territory of discourses. All the concepts like "creativity" and "digital

⁴³Youth Act (27/2006),

http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Nuoriso/nuorisopolitiikka/liitteet/HE_nuorisolaki_eng.pdf, accessed 31st October 2009

⁴⁴ It is interesting that the Youth Policy Division of Ministry of Education requested advisory opinions of the interpretation of the 8 section only from two specialists in local public politics. The opinions were given by Aimo Rynnänen, a professor of local public politics in University of Tampere, and by the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (Aaltonen 2009, 73), but is understandable from the point of view of the legalist nature of Finnish political culture (Pekonen 2003; Stenius 1997). This however contributed to both that the national level of youth participation and societal aspects of forming democracy-devices were left out from the commentaries.

⁴⁵I mean The Finnish Government's Child and Youth Policy Programme 2007–2011 by the shorter expression of Youth Policy Program later in this study.

⁴⁶The User's Guide of INCH: <http://www.aloitekanava.fi/guide/>

⁴⁷ Especially the sections of the policy program concerning *comprehensive participation* and *civic skills education* are inspired by the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*⁴⁷ adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989, which entered into force in Finland in 1991, the white paper on the EU youth policy "A new impetus for European youth" published in 2001, and the *European Youth Pact* adopted by the European Council in March 2005 as one of the tools promoting the objectives of the Lisbon strategy.

democracy" and "media literacy" form a certain picture on the current status of the right forms of participation of young people. To see the particularly Finnish aspects, the Youth Policy Program could be compared to the international texts it is based on. However under this study I lack the opportunity to take the analysis into that direction, and I concentrate on how the value of youth education is produced within the Finnish texts.

5.2 What Kind of Young People is “Required” by the Nation?

The Youth Policy Program addresses issues concerning ethnic minorities, gender mainstreaming, child poverty and problems of equality. At the same time the policy program concerns all Finnish young people, their today and future challenges. Some particular themes concerning all adolescents are found in the context of concepts such as creativity, the "digital generation", "media literacy", and "comprehensive participation and communality", especially "eDemocracy".

In many instances, using veridictory modalities the text is creating a contract of confidence with the reader especially based on the interest of the Finnish nation. Simultaneously, the expected reader of the text is implied as a person sharing the value of Finnish nation. Therefore, the value of the text is in convincing the reader supposedly belonging to Finnish nation.

Although the policy program states that the well-being of young people is an important thing as such, the goal of “balanced and happy childhood and youth” is still the “key success factor for Finnish society” and especially “success factors when it comes to the national economy”. These associations see Finnish society as the ultimate receiver of young people’s well-being, but as a tool to measure its success, economy is immediately introduced.

The well-being of children and young people is a key success factor for Finnish society. The well-being of each child and young person is of intrinsic value. A balanced and happy childhood and youth are also success factors when it comes to the national economy.

Childhood that all the readers have experiences of can be used as a mean of further creation of confidence with the reader. It expresses such generally accepted values as “well-being of each child”, children’s “opportunity to express their creativity” and being “part of our cultural heritage”. The positive aspects of “creativity, self-expression and true interaction” are self-evident in the Finnish cultural regime. Also it is easy to share the idea that “more room has to be given to children’s everyday agency” and the ideal that “young people are not bound too tightly by goal-orientation dictates from above”.

The document creates a contract of confidence with the reader by using of acceptable values. The subject of enunciation, which I call the ‘Government’ is “required” to further consider how these ideals could be achieved with certain methods and ideals that take a much stronger position of what good children’s life is, and how it could be achieved. The reason why the issue of “child and youth policy” is required “on all levels of administration and societal planning” is the changes in population structure. It is again Finnish society and changes it is confronting with that ‘require’ the Government and all Finnish people to take action. Again, it is emphasized that “it is a question

of securing the future of the society”. Societal, unity is repeated again, which means that global aspects should not only be seen as a solution, but mainly as threats. Finland is not ready to lose any of its ‘unity’.

Because the Government is in a position not acting for itself, but for the sake of all Finnish citizens, it doesn’t have to really justify its position by any scientific or other source of knowledge, but only based on ‘presupposedly’ shared values. In general, while being in a position of having to express some further “requirements” for young people, the Government is using veridictory modalities, telling the truth and comparing it to how things appear.

Securing the existence of Finnish state has been a central element of the Finnish political culture in its short history. Security also brings in the problem of its opposite or in other words the threats to the future of Finnish society. The threats the Youth Policy Program identifies in relation to youth engagement represent the opponents of young people from fulfilling the governmental goals of participation and engagement. The “problems” (opponents) have “a global framework” and “solutions” (helpers) are identified as “national” especially implementable on “local” level.

Problems may well have a global framework but solutions remain national and implementation local.

Locality is especially important from the point of view of INCH. In fact, young people are constantly expressing ideas or initiatives of things concerning issues on national level. However, INCH as well as the Youth Act concentrates solely on the local level. This could be seen as a form of control, because the ideas on local level are usually ‘less political’ and more technical, and easier to implement without larger political debates. On the other hand, locality is an important issue in democracy discourses in general (Sassi 2000, 80–84), and traditionally local level has been the medium where national politics has been implemented in Finland (Stenius 1997, 171).

5.3 Themes Arising in the Youth Policy Program

The Youth Policy Program is thematically organised around themes such as creativity, digital generation, and comprehensive participation. I am going to deal with the policy program following the same themes in this section. The analysis is based on coding I performed with Atlas.TI and grounded in socio-semiotic theory.

Creativity

As I already mentioned, creativity is one of the themes to which the contract of confidence with the reader is founded on. Creativity is identified as the helper for “perceiving and developing the society”. In other terms creativity is seen as a *requisite* and the *ability* of actualising it. It can be supported by the chances to “express their creativity” that can be associated to conformist ideas of being “part of our culture and cultural heritage” regardless of the residential, social or economic situation of the family. The creativity is therefore loaded with Finnish cultural conceptions of universality, but also conformity.

Creativity is something that possesses “children’s unique connection with”, but must be “nurtured” and young people “should be encouraged to express themselves”. The creativity is therefore not only a virtual position that young people are supposed to take but it is attributed to as a constraint to educators too. The document therefore states that young people have to be creative but the educators also have to nurture them to become creative. The question of creativity is therefore educational.

Self-expression promotes creative thoughts that are “sources of innovation”. Therefore the creativity is organically associated with innovations that are central to the knowledge society project, which is often technologically charged. “The use of technology is self-evident to the young people of today, and provides a source of creativity.” However, technology also raises a threat: “As a counterbalance to virtual life children and young people require contact with real life.” Furthermore too tight goal-orientation is seen as a threat to “creativity, self-expression and true interaction”. Some goal-orientation is still seen as a necessary component of the success of Finnish society.

The spaces in which creativity can be ‘nurtured’ and encouraged or are “everyday growth environments” and “educational communities”, according to the policy program. More specifically for example: “Voluntary child and youth organisation activities play an important role in the development of children and young people.” It is not however neutral, what kind of creativity is encouraged, because “science and art representing roughly two different and parallel approaches to the world and reality” and it is basic education that should provide this understanding for the sake of creativity. The government is making a clear distinction between art and science and therefore an ability to make clear judgments between, what is true and propositional and what is not, is implied. This could be related to the ‘truth’ and ‘authenticity’ discourses central to Finnish political culture. The creativity is not just any kind of creativity, but in order to address the innovations needed by the national economy, the distinction between scientific, creativity of the truth regime should be distinguished from creativity of artistic insight that has no instrumental utility. “Learning environments” are associated with “functionality” and opportunities for learning especially “presented by technology, information and communication technology and digital learning environments”. INCH as a ‘technological learning environment’ fits this definition of how the creativity should be taught. It is not any kind of creativity to be taught, but learning to be (also politically) creative in certain especially technological regimes under certain prerequisites, that again are also associated with “securing cultural heritage”.

Digital Generation and Media Literacy

The subject position of “digital generation” was already posed in the section considering creativity, namely addressing virtual life as some sort of opposite to the “real life”, which should be strengthened among children. The young people's subject position is now labelled as “digital generation”, as “[t]he children and young people can with good reason be called the digital generation, whose media use competence often surpasses that of their parents, when it comes to new

digital media.” This is easy to accept in Finnish culture, again creating confidence with the reader. However, a categorization is made, as it “is both good and bad” as it “*appears that* young people adapt complex ways to use information and communication technological devices”. From the point of view of veridictory modalities, how things appears is associated with the matter of how it is, but when this truth modality is removed the speaker creates the feeling of knowing how things are and should be, and the categorization of “good and bad” is brought about. The moral values are therefore questions of deeper *truth*, than how things *appear*. The technological devices could therefore be interpreted as both helpers of young people but also as opponents, or threats.

Children and young people are defined as being "multimedia consumers" and transgressing their parents' generation's technical skills. However, the excellence is not to be found in the social and analytical skills regarding the ability to filter and evaluate the information flows provided by technology. A new concept, “media literacy”, is introduced, since it is recognised that civic skills are not only “technical skills”. Confidence for the positivity of the concept of media literacy is made by notions such as “understanding about media, advertising, and marketing as well as the place these have in the society and one's own life.” It is about “guiding children and young people to sensible and safe media use and enabling them to critically evaluate media”. These values are easy to accept. These kinds of skills described as "media literacy" should be taught to children by their parents' generation, and for this, civic education is required. “Media literacy” is quite seductive concept, because it is used in wide range of discourses of education, even in critical pedagogy (e.g. Giroux & McLaren 1992). Again, it seems to be about creating confidence rather than reflecting the real issues and problems behind the concept.

Children and young people are not true subjects that could make right judgments about how and for what purpose to use the Internet for example, but as a virtual subject, that should be educated towards full subjectivity that implies the adequate subject skills, i.e. media literacy. This is again an exotactic (outsider's perspective) modality introduced, which draws young people's subjectivity, and it should especially be transformed by educating “media literacy”, which is “essential to the development of children and young people as well as a precondition of learning and good life.” The virtual modality of *having to* is again not posed to young people only, since they are not full subjects, but to their educators, the helpers, who should know better what is “good and bad” than young people themselves.

The threat or one of the main opponents is identified in the form of ‘de-regulation’. The Internet is seen as "de-regulated" compared to "traditional and established media environment." "Justification for violent behaviour or over-emphasising sexuality" is one of the threats. “In the worst case” media environments can lead to “harmful dependencies or skewed value judgements...” For example, “justification of violent” behaviour and “over-emphasizing sexuality” are introduced. However, even if these extremes are easy to judge, the emphasis put on the “digital generation[‘s]” possible “skewed value judgements” over many other aspects of young people's Internet habits is very interesting and introduces us to the long history of civic education. It gives rise to

interesting questions such as what kind of values are those that are then supported and not skewed, and why are young people so clearly defined as subjects of value education especially in regard to the Internet?

Young people are not given the possibility to make final judgments themselves, but a part of their subjectivity is already exploited and their chances of pervasive participation are restricted. This idea is contradictory to really empowering young people and to democratic ideals emphasizing deliberation and participation of different voices (cf. Setälä 2003; Rosanvallon 2008). The participation of young people in this sense is rather conformist as it is a question of participating in educational practices, where media literacy and civic skills can be taught to them. Therefore young people are, in the end, in a controlled and subordinate position, so that the possibilities of full empowerment cannot be realized. Therefore, it is understandable but also interesting that the document discusses about democracy education, and civic skills education, instead of youth democracy. The democratic subjectivity of young people is yet to be formatted from the point of view of governmental discourses, and young people are not in a position to really express their will. Instead they are subjects to democracy education, where the educators turn out to be the true actors sent by the Government.

Media literacy is an important aspect, which is associated with “civic skills and active participation”. Active participation, which means frankly some sort of engagement, clearly shows that, what is at stake on young people’s participation is a certain set of conformist civic skills and value education rather than a will to let young people openly define and articulate their own values. Of course, young people are always subject to educational accounts, but the fact how much the Youth Policy Program emphasizes the value education rather than free value generation and creativity in that respect, is interesting.

Comprehensive participation and eDemocracy

Referring to outside discussions, the policy program states that “children’s participation in the development of their own immediate environment, sphere of life and everyday life as well as developing services for children young people has been increasingly topical in both public debate and research.” Creating confidence with the reader in light of the outside references, the program states further that “children’s everyday agency” has to be given “more room”. It is interesting, whether the agency of young people is thought to contain also reflection and openness of different values, not agency in the narrow sense under a certain pre-given value system. At least in the case of INCH, the possibilities of participation are restricted to rather technical issues such as what young people can have instead of enabling them to enounce how they want to be related to and to be handled in their local environment. When young people’s participation is restricted on their immediate environment, their judgement of values is easily restricted, and their possibilities for participation already rather limited.

According to the policy program, “participation does not merely mean organised activities, voting or a wide range of leisure activities” but the “right to be heard and noticed from the child’s own perspective in accordance with what the child’s age allows”. They “must be seen as active parties with an influence on their own lives”. Because of the restriction to the local environment, it is problematic, whether young people are given the active role the quote suggests. For example, when it comes to very small issues, like what kind of potatoes school offers, in certain conditions such as when school food provider is being privatized, the young people’s voice often gets lost in the end⁴⁸. Therefore, in practice, at least currently, even in very local level, participation means only participation that presupposes adults own approval, and real active role is not established among young people.

Posing the question in what way "child's age allows" one to participate, the policy program doesn't really make any obligations to what kind of participation children should be provided with. Also, although the activity of young people is emphasized, the influence on their own life is seen in an instrumental form. Young people are only allowed to influence certain kind of practical and technical problems in their lives by presupposing an approval from grown-ups. Even on the local level, young people are not seen as active participants, when it comes to value creation or when the local issue is tied to more extensive political struggles like that of privatisation.

The text has been using mainly veridictory modalities in enunciating what kind of measures have to be taken in connection with young people’s participation. However supporting the position of the text in the importance of “democracy education” and increasing voting turnouts among adolescents, the document states that “[a]ccording to research, young people’s turnout in areas with lowest general turnout is very low, which further serves as a proof of the assumption that turnout in general is linked with growth and living conditions of young people”. As “participation in organisations is linked with higher education level, which, for its part, further underlines the connection between participating in civic activities and higher social class”. Therefore, what is at stake in the young people’s participation is not only their right to be heard, but the (economic) well-being of the areas of low voting turnout too. The connection between the participation and economic well-being is argued quite inadequately, but the passage quasi-logically implies that participation could be treated as a cause of, not only as an indicator of high economic status. Taking up the economic aspects of different areas in connection to discussion about voting turnouts further implies that the legitimate form of justifying democracy is the economic well-being, which was already stated as one of the main purposes of the policy program.

The different aspects of democracy are not really discussed, but voting is seen as a legitimate form of democracy. As another legitimate form of participation an activity of non-governmental organizations is identified. It is compatible with longer Finnish political traditions that have

⁴⁸ School food provider was to be privatized in one municipality and therefore the municipality didn’t want to consider a certain idea concerning the quality of potatoes offered in one school (MM45).

emphasized the importance of organizations as a mediating factor in political participation (Rättälä 2001, 198; Stenius 1987; 1997) As a new form of political participation, "eDemocracy" is defined as "means the utilisation of new technology in children and young people's democracy education as well as a tool for children and young people to influence and to be heard." eDemocracy is not, therefore, meant really for the type of participation the UN study is addressing with real empowering feedback system, but especially for "democracy education".

Without discussing deeper values behind democracy, the document sees it as a collection of different technical means, such as voting and organisational practices. As young people are interested in other forms of participation on the Internet, a new way for "education" is needed, in order to control the Internet environment and affect the democratic practices occurring on the Internet.

eDemocracy work aims at responding to the new trend of working and influencing as web communities. The Ministry of Education has supported the development of influencing and hearing channel pertaining to young people's information and counselling services.

The paragraph is referring to the supporting of the development of INCH. It is also identifying a need for 'web communities' without stating what they really mean. From various sociological accounts it can however be argued that INCH is not very good and lively example of a web community in such a way as the Facebook or the IRC-gallery is. Its problems as a web community were also pointed out by some of the users I gathered data from (e.g. YOF16b).

INCH has been praised (Aaltonen et al. 2009, 77) for its part in trying to solve the problem of the legitimate form of civic engagement of young people, but also as a form of democracy education targeting at increasing the voting turnouts among young people and re-legitimising the current political system. As I pointed out in section 1.5, many young people's interests seem to lie on rather different issues than those concerning conventional forms of politics. The Internet being a central theme both in the Finnish knowledge society project as well as among the "digital generation" is possible one of the reasons, why the government wants the civic education to occur on the Internet. The users of INCH however represent the frontline of the so called "digital generation", so that it really only reaches young people rather interested and good in the use of ICT but also conformist enough to use governmental solutions for engagement.

It is however questionable whether the 'actionist' benefits of the Internet could be transformed to the more managed and administered forums such as INCH connecting young people with administrative hierarchies that are left unchanged. It is unclear, whether the Government really tries to support participation or if it is more afraid of the de-regulated forms of participation that could question the conformist views of Finnish society. It seems to be trying to educate people to use mainly rather regulated systems that only quasi-empower the users for the sake of looking good in the eyes of the UN and the EU. I have shown in my analysis that the purpose of comprehensive participation is not only to support the hearing of young people, but affect the ways in

which they are allowed to and hoped to participate in, and what forms of participation should be emphasized in their education.

5.4 The Requiring Subject in the Policy Program

As I pointed out, the Youth Policy Program states certain requirements for both young people but also for their education. Furthermore, these requirements are an answer to requirements coming from outside the limits of the Government, such as the “changes in population structure”. The young people’s *need* to be heard is emphasized.

What is left unclear in the text is the one, who is requiring something and from whom. When young people need to be heard, the subject who should hear them is unstated, and ‘to hear them’ is further transformed in the nominal form of ‘hearing’. In a similar manner, as the creativity, education, and participation of young people are discussed, it is unclear who should educate them and because of whom they have to be creative and to participate and in what. The other side of these requirements is therefore left unclear by using what Hodge and Kress (1979, 26–28) call transformations (to passive form) and nominalizations. Is it the Government the one, who should hear young people, and do young people need to participate in order to influence their own life, the governmental practices, or what? Hodge and Kress (1979) argue that this kind of hiding of some actors is organic for constructing ideologies.

As Finnish society is repeatedly posed in passages creating the contract of confidence, it is of course arguable that it could be Finnish society, which should be hearing children more comprehensively, and that young people should be participating in Finnish society. However, as Finnish society is rather indeterminate subject, the policy program hides the power relations behind the concept. It doesn’t state that any single administrative unit should hear young people, and by what level of empowerment. Therefore it diminishes the empowering effect. Rather the language usage puts the attention to young people, who therefore become subjects to education and conduction. Further, the contract of confidence addressing the reader repeatedly tries to convince the reader of the need for the educational practices and measures that have to be taken for the sake of young people, the sake of us all, and the sake of Finnish economy.

Young people’s participation and hearing are not directly linked to the Government or to municipal or other local administrations. Rather hearing and participation are nominalised as concepts charged with positive values, and then in turn INCH is described as a place in which these concepts could be applied. However it doesn’t really enforce any administrative unit to take responsibility. Therefore, INCH doesn’t provide any new ways of empowering young people at least in any administrative sense. INCH is further expressed as a web community, which would answer to young people’s own needs of deliberation, but these possibilities do not turn out to be very open.

In contrast to INCH, the same EU policy, which forced the Finnish Government to address young peoples’ right to participate, caused many other EU countries to build own systems such as dis-

cussion groups and blogs. Even with lacking in opportunities to become more empowered these systems give young people space for individual value creation. INCH is unique in this respect as it addresses the problems of consultation and empowerment to some degree on local politics. With its moderation, the chances of value creation are low, but it doesn't very well empower young people either. More deliberative aspects would raise the problematic nature of the concepts of "media literacy" and "de-regulated internet environment". Furthermore, any organisation responsible for hearing young people is left out in the policy program.

Participation therefore means learning to become a good citizen and the civic skills required for that, instead of participating in articulating needs and creating values. Therefore INCH as a form of "democracy education" turns out to be the principal aim of INCH. The education as a nominalised form of action further hides the actors, who have to educate, and only the goals of education are considered. However, in the case of INCH, the main educators are the moderators, municipal youth workers, who moderate the service but also educate young people to use it.

5.5 Semiotic Analysis of the Governmental Story about Young People

As I showed in the previous section, the Internet is one of the main elements shaping the subjectivity of young people according to the Youth Policy Program. Another one is education, which puts children and young people to a position of representing a potential factor for the success of Finnish society. The centrality of education emphasizes the centrality of the 'requirements' and 'needs' posed by the Government in forming the subject position of young people, but also in order to position the moderators of INCH. They have to further provide the abilities that help young people to achieve the objects of participation.

I will now describe these positions drawing the themes together in an actantial model (Korhonen & Oksanen 1997, 55—58) that I will apply in later analysis, where I discuss how the moderators and the users of INCH adopt the subject position posed by the Government. The policy program sends young people (the subject) to fight for national economy (the object), whose receiver is Finnish society. The opponents in the picture are wrong ways of media usage (skewed values), as well as the silence of disregarded young people taking the shape of diversity and non-participation. Their common contributor is the wrong type of or non-educated action of young people. Therefore media literacy addressing wrong types of action and creativity and participation addressing non-action, which is especially bad for the national economy, are identified as the helpers of young people in their struggle for the growth of national economy for the sake of Finnish society as a whole.

The pragmatic modalities in the story are the young people's need for participation, but especially in the name of "civic skills education" and "democracy education" supported by "media literacy" preventing "skewed values" from formatting in the "de-regulated" Internet environment. The ability of young people to reach the object of participation is seen to be arising from successful education, where young people's know how of "civic skills" such as voting and 'proper' proc-

esses of initiative handling are stressed. Only very moderated and filtered possibilities of deliberation are provided, because it would pose a threat for the 'right' type of participation in the forms of creating "skewed values". The moderators of INCH are the actual human helpers of young people, and their subjectivity is also constrained by the requirements to encourage right ways of creativity and the need of nurturing. At the same time, young people's good participation appears as a question of truth (enunciated using veridictory modalities), instead of appearing as a question of certainty enunciated with a degree of hesitation. In education, it leads into a tendency to conform young people rather than to help them critically evaluate the political culture for example.

The Government's position as well as the educators' position can be associated with the *conformist young* in relation to the theoretical division between young people's positions in section 2.4. The position ascribed to young people by the Government cannot be realised by a single young person, but it is yet another story, a story of the persons own will and ambitions, provided with some personal know-how of how to achieve such objects, and with the further conviction of acquiring required knowledge and skills by the so called educators. It is a question of later analysis, how this position is transformed to young people (by the moderators), and how young people adopt it.

An interesting thing is that the governmental account on youth participation didn't really concern young people's will or own value creation except in a hidden manner when hearing young people was considered. Rather, the will or what kind of desires and in what ways young people are learning to express them is subject to educational purposes. Only some generally acceptable voices of young people about their living conditions should be heard. A will and wants are central concepts of democracy discourses in general, because democracy is often seen as a manifestation of public or popular will. Even if the Government cannot actually change people's will, the Government can affect to what kind of will pop's out and finds its way (abilities) to become articulated and ideally heard in the society. Education further affects to what kind of will finds the know-how of articulation in order to become generally heard. However, on the level of enunciation, the Government's account is close to zero-degree. In other words, it usually doesn't explicitly refer to the existence of the speaker even by giving any indirect hints. It discusses its speaker-position only in relation to other institutional accounts, such as the UN and EU conventions, and states that the solutions have to be Finnish.

Finnish society could be interpreted as being based on concepts or signifiers such as "conformity" or "similarity" (Stenius 1987 & 1997). This is the perspective from which democracy in Finland has been interpreted from. Finnish democracy is not a way of expressing different has not been a way of expressing different, contradicting opinions, but it is an expression or manifest of successful realisation of substantial similarity and conforming expressions among the Finns.

Laclau's and Mouffe's (2001) semiotics can be associated to the socio-semiotic analysis of the policy program. Finland has to create its own new discourse or heterodoxia, when the former

hegemonic discourse is dislocated by the by the EU, globalisation, and the Internet. In this transition the concepts of democracy and participation have to be transformed. Finland as a nation appears as the sender and receiver, the mystified subject of participation and hearing. To help with this, the convention is democracy is equipped with such concepts (or signifiers) that already fit Finnish society very well, like the innovation-technology based conception of creativity and the economic way of seeing the Internet as a success factor for the Finnish economy. By introducing the concepts of media literacy and democracy education they together help to strengthen the conformity principle (which is the object) for the sake of the Finnish nation (the receiver) and can address two opponents simultaneously. The first one is the truly (interpreted from the perspective some less conformist cultures) creative use of the Internet, not for the sake of the national economy and conformity. The second one is the more profound conception of democracy coming outside the borders (or at least the idea) of the Finnish nation. In this manner, the story of INCH starts to look like a way of building an orthodoxy to replace the heterodoxic situation brought up by the EU and the United Nations with youth participation requirements on one hand, and the "de-regulated" forms of participation made possible by the Internet on the other.

In sum, to conclude the Government is not only willing to make young people participate in general, but the ways in which young people are supposed to participate in are rather specified. Therefore I have shown that in fact the Government gives face to the hidden curriculum expressed in the previous chapter. In next chapter I will consider how this hidden curriculum is taken into practice.

6 Moderators: Helping or Controlling Young People?

In this chapter, I consider the perspective of 25 moderators I gathered data from. In this chapter I will start by considering, what is the role of civic education especially in the marketing of INCH. How do the moderators treat young people as political actors, and what kind of role they are giving young people as actors? I will discuss what happens after this, namely how do young people start using the service after it has been given to them? After this, I will consider the role of the moderators as gate-keepers and as helpers of young people. Finally, I will look at, how is the will of young people enounced by moderators and contrast these views to the Youth Policy Program.

Moderators are municipal youth workers, who direct the use of INCH by moderating ideas to initiatives, by removing inappropriate context, and by acting as the link between INCH and municipal or other local administration. They also meet young people in schools and in other forms of youth work, tell them about INCH, and educate how to use it and what its value is. Therefore, they have a double role in transforming the governmental civic educational goals to young people, while at the same time linking young people with municipal administrations by acting as helpers to young people in young people's struggle to have their voice heard.

I use an interview of two moderators, online data gathered from 16 moderators and notes I collected in the developmental day of INCH as already described in chapter 3. Questions expressed to moderators are shown in appendices 1 and 2. Some quantitative data concerning moderators is expressed in Appendix 6.

The discussion about INCH forms a certain narration, whose governmental side was described in the previous chapter. As the governmental side of the story was used various transformations and nominalisations of language hiding the real actors behind it, the educators concerned about INCH are further applying and transforming this narration. As I am going to be critical toward some of the moderators' practices in this chapter, it is not directly pointed to individual moderators. First, they are not specialist in political education, so they cannot reflect the problems from a specialist point of view. Second, their duty ascribed to them by the Government is only to tell young people about their rather restricted possibilities. The question and the problems I am considering in this chapter are enounced in order to point out the problems of not thinking about educational aspects of INCH by any of the actors, who give young people a certain device (INCH).

6.1 Young People as Subjects to Democracy Education

In the previous chapter I showed that what is at stake in INCH from the governmental perspective, is not only engaging young people by empowering them. Instead they are subjects to civic education as well. At least a half of the registered users of INCH have logged into INCH in schools or other public institutions. Especially in several municipalities INCH has been marketed in schools or other institutional meetings that have had a large number of participants. Another channel for

marketing of INCH has been placed under ordinary youth information and counselling services in different municipalities.

How young people are told about INCH has a significant effect on how young people understand, what the purpose of INCH is and what its meaning for democracy and engagement is, because so many of the users have been introduced to INCH by teachers and youth workers. Although there are some users that have found INCH on their own, the significance of youth work shaping its use is so strong, that I will start by considering what has occurred, when moderators have been taking INCH forward to young people. It is however worth mentioning that INCH is not however part of any ‘normal’ school curriculum, and it is not discussed regularly in civics education.

When INCH is “marketed”⁴⁹ in schools it usually takes place in some specific meetings or in association with civics studies belonging to school curriculum. About the good places for “marketing of INCH” moderators usually name schools and civics teaching, but also some youth organisations such as scouting organisations (MM45). Most of the young people for whom, INCH has been marketed to, have been of age 14–17, and most of its users are at most 20 year old.

In general, moderators see “marketing” of INCH and engagement quite positively. Civics studies in schools concern youth councils⁵⁰, and other participating channel, much more regularly than INCH. Moderators think that youth councils are a good target group for marketing of INCH too. Finnish youth councils form a rather conformist and regulated channel for youth engagement, and they only empower a small amount of young people. They form a certain kind of civic education of the ‘elite’ young rather than engaging young people equally and substantially. In fact, a lot of the users of INCH, especially most of the very engaged ones who answered the online form, were also engaged with their local youth councils. In next chapter I will discuss the problematic consequences this has for the way INCH is used.

Many technical issues have been raised during the marketing, and sometimes the moderators have been afraid of telling young people about INCH due to their lack of technical knowledge, or due to technical problems that have occurred in INCH. The technical problems that have occurred such as occasional illogicalities in the functioning of the site have been taken as the cause of young people’s limited interest in using the service. However, the moderators’ views vary in this respect, since they often name that the disinterest to use the service originates from young people’s disbelief in that “their message would really reach the decision-makers”. Moderators see young people in rather technical sense as the users, and the issues of democracy are not really brought forth.

⁴⁹ Moderators use the word “marketing” very systematically when they talk about taking INCH forward to young people. It reveals the fact that it is not openly thought as a form of civic education and many issues are left non-concerned.

⁵⁰ Only a minority of young people in Finland can be engaged in youth councils and therefore they have a quite small circle of ‘elite’ young people represented in youth councils.

When it comes to “democracy education”, it is mainly about enforcing young people in “taking the possibility to influence things in the local environment”, and any “bigger democracy emphasizing” has been left out (MF26b). Telling young people about their possibilities of direct influence in local issues, and the possibility of immediate influence on things is seen as the major inducement for starting to use INCH. Problematic issues of current democracy or any critical aspects towards what kind of engagement INCH offers are not discussed or taken up. The possibility of taking more critical account in the “marketing” of INCH is considered later, but it seems that the lack of societal knowledge affects the teaching of INCH, since it is seen mainly as a technical system, and its deeper societal meanings are not reflected.

A lot of problems have occurred in marketing situations. According to one moderator:

How can you make them to stay in Initiative Channel [use it for many times]? I mean, although I am explaining and saying we should now look at Initiative Channel, so could you go there, they are like, “fuck you” and go to other sites. So it is like if they want to watch that other site, you have to show Initiative Channel using a video projector and force them [young people] to turn their screens off, because otherwise they go to some other web sites. [MD2.]

As an interpretation to disinterest in the use of INCH that moderators regularly confront, moderators often think that young people don’t believe that they can actually affect some particular issues. Therefore, moderators usually think that the channel for influencing certain issues should be faster and more effective, and if young people just were able to change things locally, they would start to use INCH. In this sense, they see the will and ambitions of young people in quite local and narrow sense similar to the conceptions of the Youth Policy Program. Therefore the technical use of INCH is sometimes raised above the discussion of why young people don’t feel the conception of “community planning”⁵¹ very central in their lives.

Although some particular local issues might be important to young people, they still might opt not to use INCH as a way of dealing with the issue.

We really tried like all sorts of things, we had people from youth councils telling about Initiative Channel but the buddies were just like I am not interested. And then when we asked about what is then really interesting, they said they’d like to have some pizza and pie at school. But when we said that you can post that idea in Initiative Channel, they said they are not really interested after all. [MD3.]

Even if some young people were interested in changing what food they have to eat at school, they might just walk straight to the headmaster of the school and opt not to use INCH. From this perspective, as a manifestation of Finnish knowledge society (Hearn 2004), overemphasises the chances of technology, without questioning its specificity, INCH sometimes looks like an ironic joke.

One person asked why she should put some school issue in INCH, because she could just go to the rector. So that what’s the difference to writing and address, why use Initiative Channel? [MD2.]

⁵¹ One respondent stated clearly that INCH is a “channel for community planning” (YNM22).

At least to some extent INCH is concerned too optimistically only because it represents modern technology fitting the ideals of knowledge society. On the other hand, although young people are given chances to affect local things controlled by adults, they might be interested in affecting other kind of things, such as those concerning the political system or national issues, i.e., ‘large politics’ instead of ‘small politics’. However, this point of view wasn’t expressed by any of the 24 moderators I collected data from. This implies that from the point of view of moderators young people should be happy with the possibilities they are given ‘top-down’.

Moderators feel guilty for not being able to get more young people involved. In fact, some forms of more compulsive methods are posed, in order to at least have all young people try to use INCH.

And then we thought after being in one school, was it because of the school or us [moderators marketing INCH]? We figured, it doesn’t really matter who are the teachers, but you just have to say that everyone has to go to Initiative Channel now or this will take much longer for everyone, and you [young people in the classroom] don’t get home. And even after the teacher saying that you get a notice from this and that the parents are called home, and the rector is going to be informed, the young people still were that they are not just interested. You have to have a strong authority, and you shouldn’t ask if they are interested, but really, is it really that there is nothing in this town that would bother you? [MD5.]

Young people’s interest is discussed on the level how it appears, and veridictorily modeled, instead of having thrown oneself into an open dialogue together (on same side). Later in this section I am going to consider how moderators act as helpers with young people, who opt to use INCH. The position here in the previous quotations is however quite different. Indeed, if young people don’t take the position of being interested in and willing to participate at least by practicing technical skills, they are tried to be enforced to. The exotactic modalities occurring in the governmental story about making young people having to use INCH at least if they are willing to participate at all, seems to have got even stronger inside classrooms. Rather than talking about democracy and some deeper issues, the requirement to learn the technical skills to use INCH are raised much higher. The methods of “nurturing” creative participation and “encouraging” seem to turn quite forceful in some instances. The object of teaching is in elevating the know-how of young people. However, if they lack any interest (the virtual modality wanting to or *will* to participate is lacking) and they refuse to even consider learning some ‘know-how’, young people are threatened about informing parents, the rector, or making them have to stay in school longer. In this way, what is the object of education are not only the skills but the will (endotactic modality) to learn these skills and it is enforced by sanctions reinforcing the (exotactic virtual) modality of having to. The governmental imperative of enforcing the truth that young people have to be interested in participating is not enounced directly but implied beyond the enunciation.

6.2 How Moderators See Young People as Participants?

Although the picture emerging from the material I gathered from the moderators seems to make the use of INCH quite extrinsic, INCH can be used by other means too. Some young people in schools subject to the “marketing” of INCH have been quite intelligent, and made jokes for ex-

ample. They have therefore participated by other means after being subjects to rather conformist forms of civic education. Except for a few individual cases, the ‘inappropriate’ content (interpreted as such by moderators) occurred in INCH has been expressing jokes such as a TV-character Ismo Laitela becoming president etc., and other “meaningless” (MM55) or “stupid” and “ridiculous” ideas (YNF19).

My early suggestion was that the moderators would be mainly exercising direct power over young people in the basic moderation of INCH. They have the possibility of removing inappropriate content from INCH. Their judgements about what is appropriate is therefore significantly shaping what kind of content is accepted in INCH, and influences also on how young people later use the service. However, it seems that the users of INCH have mainly opted not to express ‘illegal’ and therefore ‘inappropriate’ content and young people supporting less legal values are not very interested in using INCH. Illegal issues were raised only in a few ideas and to some of them, the moderators even answered that INCH is not the right forum to change prevailing laws.

The moderators see strict control of the content however central to the functioning of INCH. According to one moderator:

You have to keep strict control and order in INCH, and even a small amount of trash you have to remove immediately so that INCH keeps much cleaner. So that if you let any dirty stuff stay there like something really ridiculous, such as Ismo Laitela to become the president like it was with one idea in Jyväskylä, and this idea stays there for a month without anybody doing anything, it is a sign to young people that this is a sort of joking channel, so that you can express anything you want here, which just in the end adds to our work, if a lot of that sort of stuff starts coming to there. [MM45.]

Because it is moderators’ duty to control the ideas, they *have to* react and direct the use of INCH to a certain, rather conformist direction seeing the purpose of INCH as a service that creates proper initiatives that fit the ideologies of local administrators. Posting just something one wants isn’t justifiable, but young people have to be directed in order to hear them only about content moderators see appropriate and suitable. Again, the exotactic modality of having to is applied in an enunciation pointed directly to the hearer, which is a sign of the speaker teaching the hearer and implying an access to the truth: ‘this is the way things are’ instead of ‘this is what some people say but on the other hand...’. However, this rises the problem of young people’s own possibility to use the service the way they would like to and reduces their opportunities to deliberately criticise the system given to them. It prevents them the possibility to express their point of view on the political system instead of just engaging with ‘small politics’.

Moderators assume that young people are mainly interested in politics with direct influence on particular issues, but they simultaneously control INCH in order to direct young people’s conceptions of democracy and the use of INCH to this direction. Moderators believe that the ideas involving specific issues are also ones that interest young people the most. They for example name “course of conduct of youth work”, “simple issues close to young people such as school satisfaction”, and “satisfaction to the living environment” as the main concerns of young people

(MF33a). These judgements arise from the ideas already expressed in INCH that in combination might form a self-amplifying cycle.

According to its developers and the Government the purpose of INCH is to inspire young people into initiative creation. If interpreted too strongly, this takes away young people's chances of expressing indirect critics in INCH as well as their maybe yet unarticulated concerns that would require common deliberation and dialogue. Taking these aspects into consideration could lead to rethinking the foundations of the service, but also to rethinking what participation means. Related to the typologisation⁵² of ideas I expressed in the 4th chapter, this type of censorship restricts the possibilities of expressing ideas of expression or participation, since only the ideas involved with specific issues are praised, except for some specific forms of participation.

The control of the content is justified for example by referring to "serious users of Initiative Channel" in whose eyes the "value of Initiative Channel could decrease" if there were some too "funny content" (MF45). These "serious users" seem to form exactly the group most adapted to the government's subject position of the conformist young. This kind of justification also discursively produces the legitimate use of INCH in a way to be associated with mainly the users, whose action fits to the conformist picture. The concept of "serious users" of INCH is interesting too, since it creates an opposition between the desirable users of INCH and the people, who are not welcome to use it because of their lack of 'civic skills' or 'media literacy'. By posing this opposition the moderators are already creating a splitting of young people's subject position that occurs among young people (see the next chapter.)

The control exercised by the moderators sometimes affects the ideas concerning specific issues as well. This has happened with ideas concerning drugs, or cigarette smoking places at schools just to name a couple. This kind of control, however, seems much less harmful because it is open and easy for young people to interpret, and although part of the curriculum of INCH, it is manipulative. The consequences of controlling 'stupid' or 'funny' ideas are probably less conscious and their restriction is not enounced as openly. It might therefore affect the democratic conceptions of young people without giving them as good chances for taking a counter position.

Referring to classification of Hart (1992) I considered in section 1.5, INCH is at best about adult initiated activity, maybe more about consulted and informed activity. The parties behind the creation of INCH would certainly hope young people would start to use the service at least in an adult initiated manner, but would probably hope for equal partnership or even child initiated activities within INCH. However, there is the danger of manipulating young people to think that young people have been empowered while in reality they have mainly been directed to use INCH in an 'appropriate' manner in the adult initiated meaning of the word.

⁵² The ideas were typologised into three categories: ideas of direct influence, ideas of participation and ideas of expression, based on Rosanvallón's (2008, 34–35) conceptualization of democratic engagement. Quantitative data concerning this division is expressed in tables 3 and 4 in Appendix 7.

The positive feedback resulting from successful initiatives is attributed as the sufficient and principally the only way of improving the political and democratic culture of young people as can be seen from the following quote.

it is also that if you think about someone in the eighth grade, she writes some idea but it fails immediately, it doesn't encourage to write another idea, or to come to the site again, but then on the other hand, if a small kid does that tiny thing and it is possible to accomplish immediately, it is much easier for her to come again to the site, and through that she learns how this whole system works. [MM45.]

After creating a contract of confidence, the moderator tries to convince the hearer that indeed, it is *true* that young people get interested by succeeding with 'small issues'. However, it is suddenly enounced that it is valuable to learn how this system works and to conform to it as if it was the truth that people are naturally subordinate to the system. Instead of restricting the output and the outcome of the political system to be only in some 'objective' and external changes like regulation, allocation, distribution, and extraction (Easton 1965), the outcome of INCH is also on the level of political culture, democratic engagement, identity creation (Saukkonen 2003), possibly in performative imitation, contingent playing with identities, and verbal expressions that might reflect better the youth culture that are not defined and attributed top-down' by adults and authorities (cf. Sassi 2000, 146–152, Dahlgren 2007, 156). However, in the previous quote the moderator only sees a successful use of power (in systemic sense) the enchanting factor of using INCH. Only a successful idea is seen as a trigger to start using INCH more continuously. Furthermore, this continual use of INCH in the form of expressing ideas (not just reading others) is seen as the ultimate objective of the portal.

6.3 Moderators Helping Young People

In addition to forms of control and educational guidance the moderators perform, they also form the link between young people and the municipal administration. In this role, they are the helpers of young people, who are willing to use INCH for an appropriate purpose and who have voluntarily taken the subject position given to them by the Government and educators. Because the moderators have a certain conception of young people's position, quite similar to the conformist picture ascribed by the Government, they can adopt their role as helpers only, when it comes to the forms of using INCH they can properly interpret.

The moderators are also informative about what occurs, when the ideas are sent to local decision-makers. The ideas that occupy the interpretation horizon of moderators and have therefore been sent to local administrative institutions, often confront opposition from the municipality's side. For example in one municipality some lawyers had to be hired by youth workers, since the municipality didn't know that initiatives coming from under aged young people are as official as the ones coming from adults. In this matter INCH has of course been successful, in teaching administrators that young people's initiatives are as real and legitimate as those coming from adults.

The initiatives often confront both direct and indirect opposition. They are not considered very fast, and the municipalities don't have any legal responsibility to answer to the initiatives anything else but that they have considered them. One moderator (MF26b) told that they once answered that "[t]his is now the decision our decision-makers made, and I am not going to change it. INCH is quite powerless when young people are not even wanted to be heard". This moderator thinks that INCH is quite ineffective when there isn't any will to hearing young people in the municipality. According to another moderator (MF28a) "very often young people's experiences of the lack of resources in health services for example have been downplayed" in such situations as: "[i]f young people want more school doctors and nurses, they are told that according to mean values, the situation is good in the municipality, because in other municipalities there are even more children per one doctor". On the other hand "decision-makers don't want to believe the experiences of young people to be true." In legalist culture such as in Finland it seems that municipalities often opt not to accomplish initiatives voluntarily and legal constraints would be required.

6.4 Enunciation of the Moderators

I have now considered the different aspects of the moderation of INCH, and it has turned out that the opinions moderators express are quite compatible with each other. However, a few of the moderators are more optimistic and open to different ways of using of INCH. After telling about an idea of making a glass pipe all the way from Finland to central Europe, in which trains were able to go through, one moderator (MF26b) didn't interpret it as solely a stupid joke that should be immediately be taken off from consideration, but instead she let it stay there for people's commenting and voting. According to her: "[c]hanging the world is impossible, everyone knows that. But then came the people, who didn't know this, and changed the world!" This less governmentally ascribed point of view seems to be in minority however. In general the moderators often make the *conformist* position of young people even stronger in comparison to the Youth Policy Program and support the hidden curriculum hypothesis (cf. Aapola 2006). In particular, this means that the democratic problems of INCH are not so much a consequence of the system, but they have also to do with the moderators.

The young people's disinterest in using or practising to use INCH is not taken as an issue of consideration, but it is seen as an inevitable fact that everyone wants to affect something. The different forms of engagement are not discussed, but it is taken as the truth that democratic engagement should be similar to everyone. In most cases moderators don't express hesitation, uncertainty, or other ways of expressing the level of certainty, while considering different forms of youth participation. Therefore, how young people should deal with society, is a question of truth to most of the moderators. From the perspective of Hodge & Kress (1988, 121–123) they therefore look at young people from a distant position. In other words they imply that they are in a different system, and not in a dialogue with young people. Enunciative modalities describing young people's sentiments are usually used to describe young people in a negative light, and it is a question about truth, how young people should be rather than knowing what they want. The

properties of the 'system' are seen as epistemic knowledge that should be transformed to young people implying that they are on the side of the system in regard to young people. It is therefore, the justification of the system that appears as both exterior to and secure in these narrations (the truth), whilst the content of the rules are transformed as knowledge (certainty).

Majority of the moderators are neither ready to interpret some ideas as expressions of doing things by other means, or even that there could be different ways of will to participate and engage that are not subject to coercion. By considering the 'right way of engagement' as a truth, they distant themselves, and often seem to distant young people as well from the possibility of changing the legitimate ways of dealing with common matters. In this respect young people are not seen as real subjects, whose values and ideas should be taken seriously.

The unquestioning features assumed by the moderators on the ontological conceptions of 'right ways of political action' are what resists young people from acquiring more comprehensive subjectivity in an open dialogue with moderators. On the other hand, the moderators have adopted a position stating that young people should be able to affect certain issues and to be heard better by municipalities. They can therefore consider the problems occurring in the municipal administration. Even if moderators were willing to help young people, young people's subordinate position to municipalities is reproduced, and they are seen subordinate to the 'system'. The municipalities' endotactic will is considered as a question of certainty, which helps moderators in taking a critical stand and implying that moderators experience themselves as being on the same 'level' with municipal administration. It allows them to act as helpers of young people, but the moral truth of young people is more fundamental and has to be fulfilled before making it possible for moderators to adopt the helpers role.

6.5 The Hidden Subject Hearing Young People

A new element brought into the governmental narration concerning young people by the moderators, is the actor, who should be hearing young people, namely the municipality. Moderators also brought about new modalities describing the content of hearing. Compatible with the ideology of hiding the actual subject, who should hear young people, the municipality was left rather faceless and instrumental in their description except in a couple of descriptions of the municipalities own disinterest toward young people. Therefore, when the hidden hearer of young people is posed, it is further implied that the issues appropriate and praised in INCH turn out to be certain 'issues' that are possible to deal with the faceless actor. The hidden position of hearer was also lacking in the moderators' narrations about young people's interest. Interest was nominalised and described in such a way that it was lacking its object. It did not explicate young people's interest toward making initiatives to municipal administration for example. Interest in particular issues is then mixed with general interest in societal participation.

Ideas that try to directly influence on some technically solvable issues, in which the actors remain hidden, are compatible with the ideology of INCH producing initiatives with no real actors.

Therefore ideas concerning, how some specific group of people treats young people, or an idea, whose accomplishment would require a substantial amount of political will incarnated by some actual actor are having only a few chances of succeeding in INCH, if at all. These ideas would bring about an actor, replacing the hidden position of the hearer, but in the current institutional context it turns out to be very hard if not impossible. Therefore the ideas being really transactional in the sense of Hodge and Kress (1979, 26–27), really possessing a subject whose action would significantly affect current order, translate action to a substantial change, seem to be in trouble. Simultaneously, the ideas that can be expressed and accomplished without a real visible actor can be realised in the context of the hidden ideology of nominalised hearing and participation.

To get over from this problem, the subjects, who should be hearing young people, should be better articulated by the moderators, if not by the Government already, and be put under more political pressure. Without such changes the disinterest or indifference of many young people is easy to understand, unless they learn the ideology establishing an empty position for the one politically responsible. Rather than manifesting disinterest toward political action, with clear political object and opponent, the disinterest in using INCH might just tell about disinterest in non-politicized non-action. Because moderators lack in knowledge or resources and the young people using INCH cannot currently create enough pressure to these actors, the ideas possible to accomplish remain such that the subject of their transaction is never really posed or challenged.

In sum, to conclude INCH gives young people a more or less effective channel to participate, and it is considered mainly as the only and legitimate way for participation. Some preventive measures are taken against non-conformist uses of the service, and in association with marketing of INCH young people are not very well informed about their more extensive political chances. The problems of INCH are not questioned in educational situations, because the moderators are caught between the public administration and young people and because they are also afraid that they would show INCH in a bad light. This leads to a non-reflected stand regarding young people and their role in fulfilling the requirements of ‘the system’ of adults. In combination with the prejudices of municipal administrations against young people, it also teaches young people that only politics without any real subject who should accomplish it is admired. Next I will deal with what happens, when young people take the suggested position by actually starting to use INCH. Especially, I have shown that the hidden curriculum supposed in the previous chapter is taken into practice by most of the moderators.

7 *Users of Initiative Channel: Puppets or Actors?*

In this chapter I will consider data gathered from 19 young people. I will first consider their general relation to INCH and what kind of narrations they use, while describing participation and political engagement. Then I will consider what kind of ideas they admire or have expressed and how they justify good ideas. I will also consider how respondents relate to other young people using INCH. After this I will draw together my socio-semiotic argument about how the meaning of INCH is constructed by different actors and what kind derives from the dynamics of their mutual relationships. Finally, I consider how they feel about their position in relation to adults, namely moderators and municipal administration, and to what kind of oppositions their subordinate position leads to. I will then consider what kind of subjectivity young people can gain in INCH.

The narration structures are assumed to be central objects of education and the analysis of INCH is based on the analysis of different (quasi- or proto-) narrations, whose producers INCH favours and whose production INCH supports. I gathered data from young people using INCH, either just trying it or having used it for a longer period of time. The data consist of 2 interviews and 17 online responses.

I didn't have the resources or possibilities to gather data from people disinterested in using INCH⁵³ except for some second hand information I acquired from the moderators. However, there is a wide amount of other research considering the young people's own conceptions of political engagement. I will therefore contrast the views of the users of INCH to the picture drawn by other research. Due to variation among respondents, I can draw a rather dense picture on issues relevant to my study.

As quantitative data described in section 4.1 and moderators' descriptions in the previous chapter show, the interest using INCH has not been very broad even among young people, who have been directly told to try to use the service. This poses the question, whether young people have any interest in participating. Other studies however point out that young people actually have a lot of political interests and ideas. In this chapter it is tried to be understood, why INCH is not used very popularly, and what kind of young people are most willing to use it.

7.1 *The Users of Initiative Channel*

Of the 19 young people I gathered data from, 10 had used the service for a period of at least 1 month, and the other 9 of them had become familiar with the service only recently. A comparison of the answers between these two groups will therefore give a good insight into what kind of young people elect to use the service for a longer period. Almost all respondents were 13–20 year

⁵³ If a person is disinterested in INCH, I feel that her voice should be heard and she shouldn't be further contacted. Therefore a voluntary contact from young people was required and it was also an ethical norm guiding my research.

old, and about three in four were women. Questions expressed to young people are expressed in appendices 3 and 4. Further quantitative data concerning respondents is expressed in Appendix 5.

Most of the 17 respondents of the online form and the 2 interviewees had been participating by other means⁵⁴. Among the respondents, who have used the service for less than a month, only two of nine had participated in a youth council or school's student body. Among long term users even 8 of 10 had participated in at least one of these institutions. Therefore, although the sample is not statistically representative, it seems inevitable that despite the initial interest in using INCH, mainly young people engaged by other conventional means end up using the INCH⁵⁵ for a longer period of time.

Despite the statistical non-representativeness of the sample, I ran a factorial analysis of value questions⁵⁶ concerning political engagement. The analysis produced two factors with eigenvalues over 1. The results of the factorial analysis are shown in tables 5 and 6 in Appendix 5. The first one of the factors puts weight especially on the questions concerning INCH: respondents possibilities to affect important issues using INCH, how positively the INCH has affected respondent's conceptions of engagement, how well INCH enhanced the possibilities to influence things, and how good possibilities ideas have in succeeding in municipal administration. This factor was connected with high number of ideas expressed and respondents high on this factor gave generally more examples on specific ideas and were more concrete. The responses between new and longer term users didn't differ much on this factor. Therefore, it seems, that the interest in 'small politics' made possible by INCH doesn't divide the potential users of INCH to those who remain interested and to those who lose their interest. I will show that the meaning of INCH however differs depending on this factor.

The second factor was composed of mainly 2 different variables concerning whether demonstrations and boycotts form a good way of influencing things. This factor measures how much the respondent prefers actionist methods of participation versus more administrative methods. Of the respondents starting to use the service recently were lower on this factor. Due to the inappropriateness of the sample it is impossible to derive any conclusions about the general distribution of this factor. The opinions about 'actionist' methods could follow from different level of knowledge of politics among people more or less engaged with the service. However, the variation of this variable shows that 'actionism' might not contradict with more conformist governmental discourses, and therefore actionist discourses are not as central to my study of INCH.

In comparison with the moderators I gathered data from the responding young people were much less positive about their possibilities to influence important things, or about their possibilities

⁵⁴ The categories of participation I asked were: members of youth councils, members of student body, taking part in demonstration, participating in a boycott, voting.

⁵⁵ Otherwise the results could be explained only if long term users were interested in responding only if they are engaged by other means, but the short term users exactly in the opposite case, which doesn't seem plausible.

⁵⁶ Questions were answered on a likert-scale (1 = fully disagree, 5 = fully agree). The questions can be seen in the Appendix 3, where I have illustrated the online form (part 4).

being enhanced by INCH (see table 3 in Appendix 5 and table 3 in Appendix 6). They didn't name the concrete changes as central reason to use INCH as the moderators did. This results from how INCH selects people interested in using it for long term, because the newcomer respondents were close to the opinions of moderators. Responding young people related on average almost equally to questions concerning the discussion possibilities on INCH and to the different forms of influencing in politics as did the moderators.

All respondents confirmed that the interest in using the service would come from successful ideas. Those believing in the possibilities of INCH had posted more ideas. Most of the respondents (82 %) stated that means of influencing things should not be violent and most opposed illegal activities as well although the illegal issues were opposed more often by respondents with less actionist conceptions of engagement. Also some respondents seemed to emphasize more vertical communication (voting, councils etc.), whilst others named also more horizontal ways (discussion, complaining about things, etc.) more prevalent in many other Internet services such as IRC-gallery or Facebook more important to political engagement.

The largest difference between the newcomers and long-term users was about their conception of the reason they use the service. The newcomers answered on average 4,35 (i.e. almost fully agree) to whether the concrete changes are the main reason to use the service, as to the long-term users, the average was only 3,25 (i.e. don't agree nor disagree). This supports my claim that since the empowerment of INCH isn't sufficient, there are other reasons to remain a long term user of INCH, than individualist interests in affecting certain issues, despite the fact that people new to INCH often keep the concrete changes the main reason for its use. This might happen by learning conducted in INCH, or by selection of who become long-term users, but I cannot address this question within the limits of this study due to lack of longitudinal data. The long term users often started just hanging out in INCH rather than posting new ideas after noticing its restricted possibilities. These users were therefore interested in INCH for other reasons than changing specific things.

For example one user stated having "got interested [in using INCH] after realizing I could affect bureaucracy. On the other hand bureaucracy has turned out being rather stiff in its attitude toward new ideas" (YOF20). Despite the restrictions, the longer-term users were able to explain themselves the meaning of using INCH not based on empowerment, but based on other reasons I will consider later. The respondents were quite conscious about their rather restricted position as agents, but also that they are interested in taking action with local and rather restricted issues. The jokes expressed in INCH were not favored by any of the respondents, but they were interpreted from the point of view of lack of knowledge in how things can be changed, and the variation of people's interests and will was not given much grounds. Instead they saw that jokers don't understand the system and lack know-how, but would become involved with the conventional system by means of education. Therefore, the jokes were not interpreted as political expressions by any of the respondents.

The respondents and interviewees drew attention to both technical problems and problems of getting their voices heard in the municipalities. The lack of discussion possibilities in INCH was a common issue. However, often this was interpreted such that decision-making is something different than discussion. "...discussion forums are not decision-making after all" but about "sharing and discussing of information and sharing knowledge". These differ from INCH "because it doesn't share information and you cannot do that there" (YOF16b). The limited nature of INCH wasn't therefore seen as a restriction, but taken for granted. Another problem is that "many vote against initiatives in order to tease others" (YOX14). Also, problematic are the "stupid subjects under which ideas are classified" (YOF17a). Overall, the system was more criticized by respondents new to INCH.

The respondents also pointed out that youth workers don't fully understand young people's political ambitions. Rather they should have been taken as a part of the development of INCH. In these critical comments a distance to INCH was taken, which strengthened the virtual subjectivity of the respondents. Often, the critique was however indirect, as they set themselves on the side of the purpose of INCH and acquiesced under the fact that INCH is not meant to be a discussion forum. Many respondents also recognized the importance of marketing INCH from peer to peer. Some respondents pointed out that moderators have overemphasized the problem of impatience of young people. Instead they argued that young people are generally much less 'everything-here-now' than the moderators and other adults think. A member of a youth council also pointed out that some of the moderation, such as removing inappropriate content, could be given to for example members of youth councils.

7.2 Ideas Important to Respondents: From Skate Park to World Peace

The respondents more positive on the chances of INCH were also more concrete about the ideas that they could express in INCH. Less positive users were expressing larger political programs and values, but they felt they cannot use INCH for proceeding with them very well. The group positive about the chances of INCH were concerned about rather practical and technical ideas such as getting a skate park or a dog park. Breaking the law as a mean of political influence was especially opposed among this group. Other respondents praised more such non-material issues as the marriage law or peace and well-being. The people praising more materially oriented ideas were also more positive about the possibilities of INCH.

Among more abstractly oriented respondents, ideas and themes concerning equality and justice were brought forth. They concerned for example sexual equality and equality between poor and rich people both nationally and in global level. "Populism", too nationally oriented thinking, and non-equally distributed wealth was considered much more in this group, although public interest and national values occurred among this group as well (YOF18). The respondents in this group were rather tolerant to different kind of ideas: "There is something positive in each of us, and everyone's ideas should be listened to" (YNF17). The respondents, who were most tolerant to

other people's ideas, were however the ones new to the service, although in general also many of the long term users were 'actionist'.

From the perspective of the local administration the young people using INCH could be seen as the senders, by putting constraints on the behavior of the administration. In similar manner as the Government sends young people towards more active participation, young people send the local government to carry out their ideas having moderators as their helpers or opponents. The realization of this model presupposes that the administration is able (from young people's point of view) to carry out the request posed to them. If administration *believes* in the value of an idea, it can be carried out and young people as the senders know this leads to a realization of the story. In most cases, the realization of the story of an idea however fails as pointed out by moderators, and because of INCH's subordinate relation to municipal administration, it seems that only through informal education of strict limits describing what issues municipal administration can solve and what kind of politics is 'appropriate', could lead to using of INCH such that more ideas could succeed. This would however contradict the hearing of young people's true interests, as it would be about direct civic education based on the idea which founds democracy on feedback mechanisms typical to client democracy (cf. Rättälä 2001, 202–203).

7.3 Justification of Appropriate Ideas

In trying to understand political culture generating around INCH, I am especially interested in different narrations on political engagement rather than in any particular issues. Almost all respondents considering young people's political engagement used exotactic modalities, such as allowances and prohibitions, and were disjoining themselves from other young people by using truth-oriented veridictory modalities (see section 2.3). Only the users new to the service, who considered other users, were less rigorous. The longer term respondents, have at least learnt to form certain narrations based on ideas of public interest and social control opposing personal will in any specific issues, contrariwise to the original purpose of INCH helping to hear young people and to bring forth their own aspirations.

According to most respondents who paid attention to evaluating others' ideas, only a will to get an idea through is not a proper form of justifying an idea. Instead an idea has to concern something justified by implying that it benefits a large amount of young people⁵⁷. that is expressed as a justifiable requirement for a larger amount of young people. Many respondents (75 % of all), especially the longer term users (88 % of long term users), opposed the idea that to want something would be a good reason to express an idea. Such ideas are "stupid" and "futile" (YNF19, YOF18). These respondents didn't see any value in just being able to express different ideas. On the contrary, the ideas had to be based on some public interest of young people or others.

⁵⁷ 53 % of ideas justified by common good were sent further, while only 29 % of the ideas justified by individual needs were sent further (table 4 in Appendix 7).

For example the benefit of Finnish nation as a whole was raised as a form of political justification among several users evaluating concrete ideas of others' and the public interest was more widely used as a proper object of ideas (e.g. YOF20, YNF19, YNF22). For example an idea supporting fast food was criticized as "the weight index of Finnish nation has been growing" and "fast food is unhealthy" (YNF22). The justifications of appropriate ideas are either based on reasoning, why the ideas are good for all young people, or they are based on some generally acceptable values such as safety.

A dog park was good because that has been craved for long ... and that people wouldn't have to complain about dogs being kept free on public jogging paths. [YOF16a.]

Some respondents required more "rational" and "comprehensive", but also more "literary" ideas. According to one respondent an idea has to be "friendly written" so that the reader can understand the purpose of the idea. In general, a good idea should be not just a single person's opinion about what one wants, but ideas *should* concern issues that young people *have to* or *need to* get. Bad ideas are such as "If you want for example cannabis to be legal, then you want, then you want that, no can do" (YOF16b).

Justification of good ideas was closely linked to the 'purpose' or 'meaning' of INCH deriving from an (sometimes non-attributed) outside sender. Some respondents had problems in figuring what they are allowed to use INCH for. Therefore, they assumed that there is some exterior purpose to INCH they are subordinate to and that they are supposed to use INCH for only certain issues.

I actually don't know, how wide issues I am able to affect using INCH. I suppose I have passed the limit within which I can affect things in INCH. [YOF20.]

This person sees the using of INCH as from an outsider's perspective in the sense that she doesn't say 'I don't believe I can use INCH for this'. Instead she takes INCH as the point of view of looking at herself. Therefore she considers does she *know* the *abilities* of hers. The limit constitutive for the system is in a world she projects herself to. Therefore, the properties of the system, in this case INCH and the municipal administration linked to it, is a question of certainty (epistemic), whilst her own deed, passing the limit, is a question of belief of in form of *supposing* (veridictory).

There were some differences to whether these questions concerned what they are *allowed to* or what INCH is *possible to* use. These differences correlate with the respondents position on the factor concerning the general orientation toward different types of engagement (actionism vs. conventional). One respondent made critical claims about these limits, as she felt "they want me to affect things such as 'this and that game to the youth centre', whilst I would like to affect to everybody's right to go to school and to that environment is to be thought in everyday life" (YOF17b). In contrary to the earlier citation, here the 'system', i.e. "they", appears as a question of truth or belief, while her own desires are a question of knowledge and something present. The

respondent didn't therefore look at herself from the point of view of the system or 'them' but more endotactically. She however uses INCH, because she is the chairman of a youth council and would therefore consider it embarrassing not to use it.

In general, the respondents confirm that there are more or less clear limits in INCH to what kind of issues it is possible to use it for, but they often would like to affect some other issues as well. Therefore, it is inevitable that the issue of the limits of politics is central to INCH. Expressing the question of the limits was a good observation. However, but it remained often rather non-reflected issue with no critical distance, and the respondents didn't seem to recognize themselves as real actors, when it comes to drawing the limits of politics. Instead they related to them condescendingly. One respondent had explained herself the limits rather directly:

Initiative Channel is meant mainly for initiatives concerning very solitary issues, small but meaningful things. It is futile to hope for World Peace in Initiative Channel. I have in mind certain larger scale policies to accomplish in national politics, but those need time, power and large human masses behind them, while the market economy is dominating. [YOF17a.]

Therefore it seems that INCH teaches the limits of politics to young people, who are not yet able to have the time and power. Even if the person has 'larger scale' issues in mind, she is fine with her subordinate position.

However, not all respondents were normative about the content of others' ideas. One respondent (YNF17), who was "still familiarizing herself with INCH" obviously hadn't yet learnt the political culture of INCH, because she brought forth ideas that matter to herself and concerning what she would like. This is contrary to the opinions of the users having more experience of INCH. She was opposing the idea of strict social control, but said that "everyone's ideas are worth hearing" albeit they should be "honest, constructive, and neutral".

The social control prevalent to the Finnish culture of conformity (Stenius 1997, 166–167) is rather prevalent in the political culture of INCH as well. Young people, who are more opposite to the idea of social control and public or national interest, seem to penetrate some other forums, as they confront oppositions if expressing "stupid" and "useless" ideas. Young people also have the tools to exercise this control in base commenting and voting phases. The "purpose" of INCH based on the name of it was often highlighted in the responses and the justifications of good or bad ideas. Therefore, the name of Initiative Channel works rather conductively.

7.4 The Truth about Young People

Many respondents, especially those new to INCH were rather indifferent to the concept of political engagement of young people. In contrary a few people, especially those connected to youth councils, however 'knew' what youth engagement is about and what are the problems of it. They were the young people marketing INCH most actively to their peers despite their possibly low amount of postings in INCH.

Youth engagement is seen generally as a positive concept by all respondents. Young people's will to engage and participate was seen as a positive entity in. However, it is interesting that many of the respondents didn't see the will of young people to be important theme in any specific issue, but only as a will to participation as such. The respondents knowing the 'truth' of people, turn out to have taken the same position, in regard to participation, as the Government has by nominalising it (YOF20, YNM15b, YOF16a, YOF14, YNF19, YNF16b). From this perspective, personal interest is important in regard to participation in general, but in participating with any particular issue one *has to* justify it in association with some public issue.

As the following example shows, the exotactic modalities concerning justifications of ideas but also the constraints set by INCH are generally associated with the conformist position of young person seeing other young people as outsiders, whilst the system is present on the same level of the speaker image. The lack in interest among young people gets the following form.

The people who commented it [TV-character to become the president] by 47 comments means that they anyway have some sort of interest but they don't *know* what and how. So that it is still a little bit open, that what issues are *young people's issues* and what young people are *allowed to* influence and how it *should be* done, so that when they didn't figure anything else, then it is the Ismo Laitela. [YOF16b, italicization AV.]

In order to creating a contract of confidence, the young person used an argument referring to knowledge coming from outside her (the number of comments) in order to show that young people have interest in general. After this, however the problem that young people don't "know what and how" was enounced with no hesitation, which establishes a status of truth for it. Since other young people were described as being uncertain of their limits (they were "open"), the speaker was above other young people and enounced their uncertainty as a truth, with no hesitation. Therefore the speaker establishing herself at the level of 'system' and 'limits' over the other young people she can mimic the governmental position and the constraints set to young people with modal auxiliaries of *should* and *allowed to*. This is further enunciated as a question of truth. Furthermore, she thinks that they can be transmitted by factual education. As an interest was figured out to exists in general, the person saw it sometimes hidden and possible to direct towards right directions by means of education.

In general, I have many times noticed that when something comes to you that how would you concern this, it is joked about. But in general you notice that it interests the person, even if she is just sitting there on her spot, there is a chance to make her interested instead of having her to walk out. [YOF16b.]

As she thinks, politics is rather something that should interest everyone and it is connected to public interest.

I have pulled a random young person and asked if she is interested in politics? Not in hell. Then are you interested in what you eat in school [...] are you interested in how much student aid you will get: yeah, a little. Okay let's try again: are you interested in politics: yeah, err, a little at least then I guess. So I mean, you cannot say that no one is interested in politics, or that person is not interested in living. [YOF16b.]

As she tries to prove herself by posing a contract of confidence she says something more between the lines. Namely, that the hegemonic system is the friend and a part of her world, but the other young people she knows the truth about are not. This is established by enunciating other young people with truth modalities and by concerning the political system with certainty. Politics, in the hegemonic sense, is therefore argued as being something everyone has to be interested in. Otherwise one is rhetorically made disinterested in living as well. An importance to interpret different meanings and values of politics is compromised as the importance of the rather conformist view of politics is seen as the right type of politics. Prevalent political system is therefore valued equal to life, as the only *allowed* ways of action are implied to be the ones subordinate to the conventional political order.

Education was seen possible, and the young people concerned about the orientation of others' interest saw the means of education to be rather informative and imperative. It consist of telling the right ways of participation instead of discussing about the values and methods of participation.

I have like preached them about it [INCH] so many times about how they are better being there, so that at some point they started using ear plugs [...] Politics is such a spook people don't really *know what it is*. They think it is something über, scary, and mysterious game in the corners and terrible corruption and conspiracy, instead about saying hello and talking about it is bad that the roads are not cleared from snow and that there is not really gravelling on the streets. [YOF16a, Italicisation by AV.]

In this citation too, the politics, or the properties political system, is seen as a question of knowledge people are often uncertain of, but the respondent at the same time knows the of its value.

The participants of youth councils saw INCH as a supportive way for "ordinary young people's" participation, while some of them thought having 'better' ways to participate themselves. They were talking the most enthusiastically about the possibility of peer to peer marketing of INCH. Therefore their relation to INCH is clearly not only concerning the form of democratic engagement trying to influence in Rosanvallon's (2008, 34) sense. Instead it also covers the third form, participation, and they engage in democracy of expression by mimicking Finnish educational discourses of truth about the people. INCH might therefore connect people as a in a movement (from young to young) based on circulation of the governmental or national discourse. This is one of the aspects how the actionist forms of political engagement could be related to the governmental ones as suggested by Bennett (2008), albeit it shows the other side of the coin. Namely it shows the prevalence of the hegemonic discourse reproduced by young people at least in the case of INCH. Finnish political culture has been based on strong popular movements, but so far INCH hasn't been able to reclaim any such popularity (cf. Stenius 1987).

7.5 Indifference to the System that 'Sucks'

Some of the respondents especially among those, who were new to INCH (YNM15a, YNM15b, YOF16a, YNM44, YNF20, YNM22, YOF17a, YNF15) were relating themselves to INCH and conventional politics very differently than the users, who were educating others about the importance of politics and the right ways to exercise it. Therefore, there is something else to the

meaning of INCH than the social control performed by normative evaluation of others' ideas and educating the truth of the people. Instead, there were respondents (although most of them not using INCH for a longer period), who felt that there is too much control in INCH, and that it is not to be expressed in INCH what politically or socially really matters to them. They were rather tolerant to others' ideas and were not evaluating ideas but rather INCH itself or Finnish political system in larger sense. Among the 'indifferent' group, an evaluation of INCH and politics occurred from the perspective of an 'outsiders' to the system, while other people were not related to as outsiders, but instead as people possessing right to their own opinions. Contrary to the people educating others and concerned about 'right ways of politics' and truth of people, the young people 'indifferent' to conformist views of politics did oppose the classification of young people under a singular subject position.

Responsibility attributed to such actors as the state or the municipalities is, what was lacking in narrations of this group was. Politics was understood different from administration and politicians were criticized. Direct means of democracy but also deliberative discussions on the Internet were emphasized as good forms of democracy, should there be enough mass and political pressure behind these forms. In order to create such pressure, for example advertising was expressed as a possible form of inspiring people to engage. About INCH it was said that "it has to be introduced in a right way, otherwise it sucks" (YNM22)⁵⁸.

Many issues of the current political system and state organization were expressed, such as the politicians being populists and sort of TV-characters. Therefore, the national level of politics was an object of veridictory modalities, i.e., distant from these respondents own life. The 'indifference to politics' was based on different image of societal structures than with those more engaged with INCH. Among indifferently oriented respondents the meaning of service wasn't enough to constitute it as a web community.

The active users of INCH confronted the problems of municipal administration and draw their own picture of its state, whilst the not yet engaged young people, who were just trying INCH, considered the municipal or other administration in their narrations about politics more rarely. This supports my claim that INCH affects to how young people understand politics. Many young people could be interpreted as rather indifferent to administered forms of governing people. The more globally oriented and radically actionist young people described in other studies (e.g. Paakkunainen 2005a), were silent and non-represented in INCH. Rather young people, who possess the know-how of producing conformist narrations were well represented in the 'core group' of INCH, and linked to other municipal youth organs as well.

⁵⁸ The respondent didn't first understand how school teaching for example could accomplish this. However, it was due to seeing teaching firmly associated to conceptions of one-way teaching and not as a form of dialogue. He then thought that if students could discuss and be genuinely honest and critical, some civic education could succeed.

7.6 Meaning of Initiative Channel

The previous analysis of young people's narrations regarding INCH can be drawn together in the following diagram describing paradigmatic opposites of possibilities in relating to ideas (content) and the concept (form) of INCH. These possible orientations are not personal properties. Instead, they are qualitative formations that occur in different narrations, while some of these formations fit better to other formations. Therefore the diagram could be used in order to classify users, whilst in this study I am more interested in the elements constituting the meaning of INCH and its political culture. Thus the statistical non-representativeness of the data is not problematic, since I am not claiming anything about the quantitative occurrence of these formations.

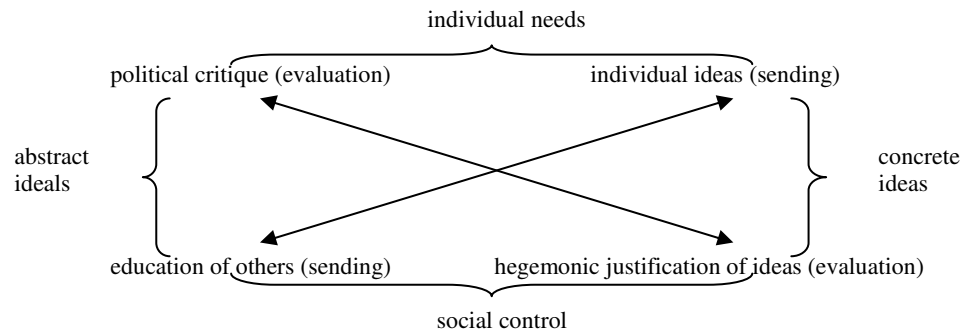


Diagram 2. A semiotic square describing the paradigmatic oppositions between different ways of relating to INCH (cf. Greimas & Courtés 1986, 34–38).

The diagram 2 is a semiotic square representing two paradigmatic axes dividing the possible orientations regarding the service. Horizontal division represents, how concrete issues the meaning of politics derives from. The respondents more positive about their chances of influencing important issues using INCH where expressing thoughts compatible to the concrete end of the horizontal axis, whilst the less positive respondents expressed more abstract thoughts.

The vertical axis of the diagram describes whether the value of the system is associated with social control or individuals' possibilities. Respondents, who were enunciating themselves on the side of the system or the nation, were emphasizing social control, whilst the respondents who enunciated themselves among other people, instead of the system, emphasized individual variation and individual needs. From the perspective of individual needs, consideration of concrete ideas concentrates in individual possibilities, whilst from the perspective of social control different forms of justification based on the hegemony of Finnish political culture were expressed.

The possible splitting of the position of young people could be understood in various ways in connection with the diagram. The upper end represents the position of young people I have called the *indifferent young*, whilst the lower end represents the *conformist young*. I will now describe these two ways of relating to the service based my previous analysis, and I will then relate all of the four elements to different actantial models.

The users of INCH can be divided loosely into two different groups. First, there are the users, who are interested in participating, not with particular issues, nor specifically with some larger polit-

ical issues, but in participating as such. They understand it as taking part with decision making in municipalities. These users, who fit the ideal type of the *conformist young*, might use INCH for longer period of time and fulfill the governmental ideal of treating it as a 'web community'. They usually have connections with other institutional organs such as student bodies or youth councils. These users possess skills to reproduce governmental narrations about youth participation, and democratic engagement based on the 'truth of young people'. The system appears to them in the form of allowances, freedoms, imperatives, and prohibitions that are not questioned but mimicked, which hides the content of their personal interest. Instead of opposing the system the opposition is rather projected toward other mates.

As it turned out, young people fitting this ideal type are not representing themselves as singular subjects, but instead as subjects to conformist participation. Furthermore they conduct other young people towards their own conception of how young people should be. The truth of good life comes from the senders discourse, and it is inspired by the realization of their subordinate position to adults, while the others constitute the system on whose side they have to be. The conformist young becomes herself a political subject as far as she acts within constraints of conformist culture. The subjectivity of the conformist young is however extended, and noting her limited chances, she steps on the side of the 'system' and starts to reproduce and mimic the enunciation of the Government instead of fulfilling it. Because of the limitedness of empowerment in INCH, it is exactly this 'extended subjectivity' mimicking the Government enunciation, that becomes distinct factor of the 'core users' of INCH.

On the other hand, there are users, who don't use INCH often and relate to it or other state oriented politics rather indifferently representing the *indifferent young*. As it turned out, from this point of view the Government and often INCH too is lacking the competence of responding to her needs. Often the Government, or local political or administrative organs, don't even appear as actors. However, it is possible in this position, that the Government's goodness appears as a truth or an illusion, which means that she is distant to the Government. The failure of the Government is a certain fact coming from her peers. In each particular case, whether the story of indifferent young person fits the governmental story, is an empiric question, but my consideration of INCH shows that in the case of INCH, it usually doesn't.

These two ideal types form a dualist relation in regard to other actors such as the Government or the nation, and to other young people. In the case of the indifferent young the evaluation of INCH is not made by the success of the nation but by the young person herself. The prevailing political system and Fennoman political culture based on the collective truth of the Finnish nation become the object of politics, while its changing, the real sending, is reserved to the indifferent young. The indifferent young acts by setting constraints to the Government and to the civil society based on illegal action or based on some other non-conformist ways.

It is possible that an indifferent young also acts by delegitimising the conformist political culture. However, she wouldn't narrate the political culture as a universal truth, but would find some other

ways to cope with it indifferently. Therefore, the two subject positions don't have to be in contradiction with each other, but the indifferent people, who use INCH for their own purposes for example, can be taken as a political symbol for the success of the conformist young. This can happen if she interprets the succession of the indifferent young as a sign supporting the conformist young's own stand. The conformist young rather mimics the governmental enunciation, while the indifferent young either fulfils or doesn't fulfil the story written by the Government. If there occurs a contradiction between the two positions, oppositions are about to appear. Also in any particular case, some thoughts of youth are more compatible with the position of the indifferent young and some with the position of the conformist young. Therefore these positions should be treated as ideal types, i.e., analytic constructions that don't face with real manifestation in any single person. In the case of contradiction, the hegemonic discourse is dislocated, but in the case of non-contradiction, the political system is relegitimised.

From the perspective of the diagram 2, the positions of conformist and indifferent young can be understood in association with two actantial models. A conformist young, who represents the side of social control in the diagram, takes a position of a sender of young people in an actantial model described in the governmental model of young people's participation, whilst in regard to the model describing young people sending the municipality to deal with some particular ideas as objects, the conformist young takes the position of a receiver and critically evaluates others' ideas from the perspective of hegemonic political culture.

On the other hand, an indifferent young takes the position of a sender of the municipality, while she expresses ideas that matter to her. When it comes to more abstract level of politics, it is the system (for example INCH or national politics) and the prevailing political situation that is critically evaluated. Therefore an indifferent young takes the position of a receiver in the actantial model, where the Government is the sender and young people are the subjects.

Although the research data is not statistically representative, it seems that the diagram 2 could be used in classifying users of INCH as well. Each of the respondents was leaning towards one of the four corners more or less clearly. Although quantitatively more representative data would be needed, I suggest that this model could be used in analysing the dynamics between different user groups of INCH.

The young people 'indifferent' to the Finnish truth of people form a continuum. The other end is constituted by young people, who oppose to use INCH, while the other end consists of those, who try to use INCH to get something they want, but who usually learn that INCH is not a very good forum for that after all (political critique). The other end of this 'indifferent' group (individual ideas), more actively using INCH, who don't really reflect its institutional connections, is used by more conformist actors in order to claim the status of success of INCH (education of others). The group justifying ideas based on Finnish hegemony exercise control over the others' ideas (commenting, voting), who in combination with moderators or young people taking position of educators guarantee that INCH stays a rather conformist channel fitting the concept of youth

participation drawn in the Youth Policy Program. This fact is further supported by the data in table 4 in Appendix 7.

The conformist group of ‘active users’ reproduce conceptions of proper forms of politics and justification by controlling the ways of relating to ideas expressed by people on the ‘indifferent’ continuum. In next sections I will show how antagonist oppositions are created in order to heighten this group’s status in the eyes of adults who often fail to take them as seriously as they would like to. The social control constituting a part of the meaning of INCH seems to have effects also to the success of ideas. In table 4 of Appendix 7 I have expressed the results showing that the political expressions expressed in INCH are mainly involving social control. Furthermore, the ideas based on ‘common good’ instead of ‘individual needs’ are overrepresented among the ideas sent forward and succeeding in INCH.

Indifferent young people could be divided under actionist discourses I cannot consider here. However, interest in the global movement or radical activism or total disinterestedness in governmentally organized decision making wasn’t pointed out by any of the long term respondents. Because of its distribution, the factor two (section 7.1, table 4 and 5 in Appendix 5) described in association with value questions however shows that the division between actionism and conventionalism doesn’t seem to be relevant factor in understanding what makes people to use INCH. Non-governmentally oriented strong engagement might correspond to narrations possessing veridictory modalities over truth of people but with different actors as senders deriving from different discourses than the one about conformist young. INCH divides people mainly depending on their faith in the Finnish hegemonic discourse. The indifferent people form a continuum in their interest for using the service, whilst conformist young ‘have to’ use it.

Our division of young people to conformist and indifferent types is partially compatible with the division between *dutiful citizen* and *active citizen* suggested by Bennett (2008, 15–19) deriving from administrative or actionist discourses. In comparison to previous chapters, the governmental discourse is transformed to young people, but it is substantially realised by only a part of young people. However, the conformist and indifferent positions of young people arise from only the hegemonic discourse. This is derived by using socio-semiotic theory of modalities emphasizing the inside-outside aspects of subjectivity rather than the vertical relations between citizens and the administration arising between different discourses. For services such as INCH this approach seems more applicable, as INCH doesn’t really allow enough liberty for it to become a platform of deliberation between different discourses. Also, as it turned out, inactivity in the sense of actionist discourses, which is certainly not a prescriptive property of an active citizen, can be taken as a manifestation of indifferent young resisting action prescribed by others. Therefore even in analysing a contest of different discourses, the socio-semiotic approach could be used but it would derive a wider variety of positions than in my simple case with only one main discourse and its opposition.

7.7 Young People's Position Subordinate to Adults?

I have considered the meaning of INCH from the perspective of different young people. Now I will start to consider how young people's relation to adults is related to the different meanings and oppositions expressed in the previous section.

The "hearing" of young people was criticized for its ineffectivity and to the inadequate level of empowerment. The "adults are like that yeah, manage your [young people's] little circle there, but we [adults] do the real decisions" and "it starts looking that the same goes with Initiative Channel as well" (YOF16b). She felt that "the initiatives from the channel are not taken seriously". If young people are given some rights, they also have strong pressures from adults, who "by saying that now that you young people have been able to make this suggestion in youth council, you better make it through [unanimously]." They were required to establish a unitary subject position not to allow young people deliberate on their own, but in order to save adults' more valuable time. Some respondents expressed critical opposition toward the adults, when it was possible under the rules of the system.

Somehow I just feel that young people are being bounced around, all the time they are like young people have to be heard, young people have to be able to influence things but at the time you really open your mouth and say that I am a young person, I want this, here is this draft, it is done exactly as your bureaucratic rules state, and there is nothing to argue about. [...] We put some facts on the table, that not like this, and they were like so, so...

After the Youth Act was posed, they have had to take young people's opinions more seriously. It has come to the municipality as well that they just have to take us [young people] into account. [YOX15.]

The rules of the system possess a hegemonic status, but in relation to other actors such as adults, the rules are considered as "facts on the table", while subordination of young people is then opposed, since it can be enunciated as contradicting with the system. For some respondents, the system is so distinct and obvious truth determining the users' political reality that affecting outside the rules of the system is not really even considered or implied⁵⁹. The system is build in narrations using exotactic modalities of having to, prohibition, and allowances as if there was some subject of 'them' in the interior of the political order that qualifies 'appropriate' political activity. The only way to affect the current system seems to be under its current rules:

Actually there is something that could be done better in the contemporary system, both locally and nationally, but it is that you cannot solve it by reclaiming a building and finally the parliamentary building, but you *have to* make it so that you *educate* yourself about the contemporary system, and look at what is wrong with it in the end and then change it under the rules of the prevailing system, because if you start doing that without possessing knowledge and *know-how* [of the current system], you just go

⁵⁹ Especially the legalist nature of the Finnish society and the Finnish political order is reflected in one idea asking young people to be better educated and informed about immaterial property rights in schools instead of willing to affect those rights and their legal constraints. This can be opposed to tendencies for example in Sweden, where the immaterial property rights are not treated as a legal but more politicized question as the new party build around the Pirate Bay movement clearly shows.

from bad to worse. [...] Somehow I feel that Finland doesn't want to get into a civil war, or that there is too little time from the previous one. [YOF16b, Italicisation, AV.]

The system is seen so legitimate that a person's interest and will not to act under its requirements is seen as something they indeed shouldn't do. Instead it is seen as something that could be coerced by proper form of education and by providing know-how about the current system in a way similar to the position of the Government. Even the national trauma of the civil war in 1918 is involved⁶⁰ (as a contract of confidence) and named as the only alternative to the belief in the system. The form of the system is a question to be argued about, i.e., what could be done better, but the ontology of the system and its rules' moral value, as the constitutive truth of the society, is not questioned.

In general, the users of INCH have rather well occupied the position of youth engagement given by the Government. The participation in INCH is seen as a goal as such. It is understood in the sense of what is the public interest and what young people need to get instead of what they want. Therefore, the users of INCH are people, who have been able to build narrations they can fit the prevalent political system in, and argue of their own will and needs as if they were something where the interest was coming from 'outside' of them. In their narrations the position of the conformist young is stressed over the position of the indifferent young. They can be more endogenous and express their own aspirations only provided with the ability to transform that position into a narration constituting the will using exotactic modalities. It doesn't mean that their action isn't inspired by young people's own will, but in order to articulate their will properly in INCH, they have to be able to equip the will with narrations that have their roots in the prevalent political culture, which is based on social control, obedience to the law and order, and the restricted chances of horizontal communication. Furthermore, direct opposition toward the system or the ruling power is not posed by any of the respondents, who have stayed interested in using INCH. More so, the prevalence of the system teaches young people to take an outsider's position to youth engagement, but also on their own opinion: "so, in my opinion, my personal opinion about this is that young people are interest, but they don't know what and how" (YOF16b).

7.8 Value of the System: From Splitting To Antagonism

According to narrations expressed by respondents, the disinterest in using INCH comes from the fact that young people cannot substantially realize their (virtual) will by their own (actual) know-how and believe (realization) they have acted meaningfully. This is due to administration's limited interest to hear them unless their belief is supported by an adoption of conformist discourses. They remain interested in using INCH, if they believe in the current political order and are able to build narrations they can fit themselves and the political system into.

⁶⁰ The civil war is interesting theme to bring fourth as it has being central to the combat over the hegemony in Finland for several decades after the war and its backgrounds were debated in Finnish academic discourses still late in the second half of the 20th century (Alapuro 1995).

INCH hasn't been able to reclaim its status as a popular web community⁶¹, although young people are interested in participating online independent of their interest in politics. Young people split into two groups in regard to whether they are interested in INCH as a web community, or not. The splitting is not only a division 'on paper', but some young people were classifying and dividing the other users of INCH, which is rather similar to the classification made by some moderators I mentioned in the previous chapter.

In fact, many of the respondents judged the people who express jokes, although some people new to INCH, also supported or were indifferent to the idea of using INCH for joking. The moderator's position fits the picture of the respondents' conceptions of using INCH rather well.

Absolutely thoroughly foolishly childish! Ismo Laitela [TV-character] is not even a real person! It is just made up character, who is acted by someone. Only a role! I am seriously annoyed about how some people can keep *Salatut elämät* and other TV-series as reality TV! And think actors' characters as real people! That they are not. The reality and fiction should not be mixed like that in this obvious situations. [...] These jokes and gags are foolish and bad because same kind of idiotic people who have put the initiative probably also vote for it. I oppose unconditionally and harshly. That is foolish, thoroughly foolish. [YNF19]

The joke about Ismo Laitela was opposed as being "thoroughly foolishly childish" and interpreted from a point of view that the person, who has expressed the joke mixed the TV-character with a real person "in this obvious situation". This implies that it is hard to disjoin from the plane of appropriateness of ideas and to consider some deeper meanings of these kinds of jokes. Another young person was concerned about are young people "taken seriously" because of the jokes and opposed the idea based on assumption it would decrease the "seriousness of the initiatives"⁶². Therefore a subordinate position of young people in politics can further contribute to oppositions between young people, as they need a well established identity in order to demand their rights, but have to antagonistically close out other young people, while constituting this identity.

Many of the 'core' users, who belong to other youth institutions, saw themselves as somewhat better and above 'ordinary young people'.

I feel I am the only one making comments [in my municipality]. The commenting might be a little scary thing for those ordinary young people, I mean I am not such a nose digger. [YOF16b.]

The division of users into more and less serious users gives young people a model, that people with certain habitus would be more justified to engage in politics. It could be argued that young people, who lack in the changes and maturity of political reflection, make this kind of divisions even easier and less consciously than adults. Young people, who are engaged with many rather institutional forms of politics already, when they are teenagers, seem to form substantial part of

⁶¹ Statistics Finland: 2008 Survey on ICT Usage.
http://www.stat.fi/til/sutivi/2008/sutivi_2008_2009-04-27_tie_002_en.html, accessed 30th October 2009.

⁶² As the problem of seriousness seems to contaminate other ideas too, this shows that some kind of overdetermination (cf. section 9.2) is involved between particular ideas and young people's participation in general.

active users of INCH. They learn the abilities to engage in the contemporary society and they learn to downplay other young people's demands and interests.

The forms of social control in INCH further contribute to the division among young people and the to the formation of political culture, which questions young people's chances of equal participation. Only young people, who already possess a politically oriented habitus, i.e. possess certain cultural capital providing the ability to express narrations based on the hegemony of prevalent political system, have the best chances to learn more skills and become more interested in politics. This can create a self amplifying loop for the benefit of a minority of young people and also contribute to an antagonist division between 'serious' young people and the passive, non-serious, or indifferent young people. This is deriving from young people's subordinate position, which insists a strong identity, which could unite young people, but which is failed by the indifferent.

Also more proliferated identifications and oppositions are practiced in INCH such as "[n]o suggestion is of course not inappropriate but issues such as getting a new skate park after the previous one has been messed up and broken are quite pitiful." The respondent identifies skateboarders as a single group with one will, and if their place is being destroyed, the respondent assumes it is the same people or at least the same group that shouldn't have further goods from the municipality. As a counter point of view a moderated discussion is suggested:

I would like young people to be able to discuss about their thoughts in an controlled manner, and if we think about these genres such as emos, hip hoppers, or people listening to heavy music, and there is teasing between them, they could using the service really deal with the situation. Using it the teasers maybe figure, that the others are quite reasonable people and don't tease them that much. This could however be almost impossible to change. [YNF15.]

The comment was one of the few narrations that saw politics as something else than only from the systemic perspective and being constituted by virtual exotactic modalities. It is about enabling different habits and resolving antagonist oppositions, which is interesting since this kind of discussion between subcultures is foreign to Finnish political culture based on universalist conceptions of conformity and peasantry, and INCH cannot currently provide possibilities for this kind of resolutions (cf. Stenius 1997, 171). The last sentence however shows the persistence of the hegemonic discourse.

The socio-semiotic division of narrations expressed in section 7.6 splits the subject position of young people in INCH in a way compatible to the splitting suggested by Laclau's and Mouffe's (2001) discourse theory. The splitting in hegemonic sense occurs between the two groups highlighting different narrations. The first of these groups is on the same level with governmental institutions, and considers other people from the point of view of veridictory truth modalities, whilst the other group considers the state and municipal institutions indifferent or outsiders in their life. The opposition is projected towards the indifferent group failing to fulfill the conformist norms.

7.9 Young People as Subjects of or Subjects to Education?

Although young people should be heard as individuals, hearing turns out to denote collectivizing young people and hiding their differences: all young people should act ‘seriously’ in order not to downplay ‘serious users’. This identification, while confronting municipal administration, easily produces antagonist tendencies if the identification is used by a part of young people, which actually might possess selfish needs under the cover of an official mandate.

The active users of INCH express narrations with substantial similarities to the moderators and governmental conceptions of democratic and political engagement. In this sense, the hidden curriculum of INCH seems to work at least in choosing the people, who start using the service actively. For example the requirement of one positive comment and more positive than negative votes tells young people they should concern issues that other people in INCH share with them. Issues such as personal indisposition might be silenced as INCH compels to issues to which a mandate from other users is easy to establish.

Users of INCH are mainly teenagers or people in their early twenties, but they are given a tool that helps them further enforce an antagonistic division between the political, engaged group and the less engaged young people. While it helps some young people to have their voice heard, it simultaneously forms to some young people a playground, where they can practice the political games and skills helping them to yet enhance the division between actively engaged young people and less actively engaged ones. Rather than to help all young people to learn the required civic skills, it seems that some young people, who already know them, get the most out of INCH, while the others are mutually excluded. Instead of supporting the equality principle central to democracy it, on contrary, might support the development of an antagonism. This problem is not a peculiarity of INCH, but a problem central to democracy and civic education in general. The dualism of young people being heard as equal participants, while simultaneously being subjects to caretaking, is a key ambiguity in analyzing the problems of youth participation. There are two ways of coping with this problem, and I suppose a more critical approach would be opposite to the one posed by INCH.

The position created by INCH treats young people as grown-ups, when it comes to making them independent. INCH treats them as if they had autonomous abilities to articulate their needs. Their positions is seen from outside and their position is articulated using exotactic and veridictory modalities. On the other hand, they are treated as children or incompetent, when it comes to the actual decision-making procedures and the forms of control, in which their behavior is constrained in INCH. The municipalities often don’t take their problems, such as those concerning health services, seriously, and only accomplish their needs that are already given some political support by adults in form of certain special budgets and solutions to problems that are clearly recognizable by the decision-makers themselves. In section 9.3 I will suggest an opposite position in relating to young people based on ideas deriving from critical pedagogy.

In sum, to conclude the way in which the governmental discourse is transferred to INCH by moderators and other actors has a serious effect on the way in which INCH is understood by its users. This leads to certain rather specific ways of using INCH, to strict forms of social control exercised by young people themselves and antagonist oppositions. It also seems to work as a tool helping to hide real subjectivity in politics by nominalizing young people's needs. In this sense, it reproduces the governmental discourse of participation quite well.

PART III

Conclusions and Discussion

8 Conclusions: The Role of Values in Political Culture

In this chapter I will first draw together the socio-semiotic argument about political culture generating around INCH and overview the results derived in the analysis. Then I consider some more general problems occurring in association with the ‘crisis’ of democracy and how they could be approach by using socio-semiotic theory. Finally, I connect the conclusions to a more general discussion of civic engagement, which can be loosely divided into action oriented and managed discourses.

8.1 Overview of the Results

In the fourth chapter I showed how INCH is having certain structural properties constituting a basis for the ‘hidden curriculum’ of INCH. This derives from the requirements to register, and from commenting and voting processes favoring negative empowerment over positive empowerment. In the fifth chapter I started by analyzing the Government’s documents behind INCH. This gave the hidden structural curriculum a face to associate it with.

The Government recognizes the fact that young people among other age group have been withdrawing from conventional forms of democracy. The disinterest in participation is associated with global context manifested by the “de-regulated internet environment” and incapacity in “civic skills”. The subject position of the Government claims the mandate of the “whole nation”. The emphasis is put on certain forms of creativity, especially related to ‘knowledge society’ and “Finnish cultural heritage”. The creativity is nothing radical bur rather conformist and controlled fitting the administrative ideology of the Finnish Government. Young people are therefore defined as the object of civic skills education, and even when it comes to politics, creativity is an object of nurturing. Young people are provided with abilities (INCH) to answer the Government’s demand of more comprehensive participation. The hegemonic discourse is being dislocated but tried to be relegitimised. While the Internet as an environment is seen as part of the cause of the dislocation of the hegemonic value system, it is simultaneously seen as a solution to get young people along with the conventional values. However, the Government refuses to bring forth the subject, who should hear young people. Therefore, young people are ultimately left on their own.

The moderators as educators could have their own word about the Government's position. Due to lack in knowledge or proper education they however transfer the 'governmental' position to young people. They end up having a substantial power in controlling the actual content of INCH making it hard to use INCH counter democratically (cf. Rosanvallon 2008) in order to dislocate the hegemonic discourse even further. The possibilities of such activities (such as jokes about the political system) are undermined both by the moderators' direct control but also by control exercised by other young people who reproduce the moderators' critical position. Young people are treated as a class or collective, whose 'serious' representatives are defended at the expense of young people in the margins of 'participation'. Therefore ideas concerning issues that are rather 'conformist' are supported, while other kind of ideas (jokes or non-conformist issues) are dismissed, because of the inability to interpret them.

Young people, who visit INCH don't seem to get very interested in its use. As other studies show us, they rather opt to use more deliberative and less controlled sites such as blogs and discussion forums. In those services, where they can act in less conventional and conformist manners, they don't have that as direct access to local administration but they can be more endogenous in their identity-formation and opinions. A portion of the young age group, however, starts using INCH more regularly. Most of them have however stopped using it at some point and only a minority becomes regular users of INCH. These young fellows confront public administration, which doesn't really respect their ideas substantially.

The young people, who become regular users of INCH, have the abilities to fit their personal interest to narrations of political engagement typical to Finnish cultural heritage. These include norms of social control and conformity in the forms of justifying good ideas. In this sense, the Youth Policy Program's inherent values and hidden curriculum have been successfully built into INCH with its structural properties allowing people to exercise social control. Regular users are the people, who have certain habitus and gusts to use INCH besides its problems. They have an ability to make narrations based on justifications with a collective, national sender. However, as they feel their position subordinate to that of adults, they feel important to act under the rules of the prevalent political system in confronting the adults needing to create rather unified identity to young people. Therefore, they 'need to' oppose non-use of INCH and also oppose its use for what it is not meant for, such as joking. In order to constitute a uniform identity, they create opposition that have some antagonist features. The opposition between young people and adults, yet unresolved under the rules of the system or the governmental discourse, is projected into an opposition between different groups of young people. This is understandable, because young people are not nurtured in a manner, which would help to avoid these oppositions.

INCH has been treated as a successful project by the Government. What makes a project successful is not a large amount of interested young people, but the relevant actors' belief in that what they do is important and meaningful. The only group that is not sharing this belief seems to be

young people not feeling empowered by using INCH. Young people also the people with worst possibilities to get their voice heard in it.

The subject position of young people produced by the Government is quite strict. They are required to fulfill the conception of an 'authentic' and true Finnish citizen. The Government requires young people to participate, while it diminishes the possibilities of two way open dialogue and horizontal communication between peers. What young people really want is never really asked, when the tools are designed.

It seems that people around INCH shouldn't be imitated by the propositions young people express, because otherwise they might stop using INCH. In contrary they could be seen as subjects, who don't have to be controlled, but whose all kind of ideas are important in one way or another. They could also be treated as children, not as objects to control and disrespect, but as vulnerable people, who might need help in articulating their specific and possibly very personal needs that they often are too shy to bring forth.

Many of the problems expressed in section are not peculiarities of INCH but typical to political struggles in general. Habermas (1994) has suggested the possibility of rational deliberation, but for example Dahlgren (2007) points out the problematic nature of establishing rational or equal communication on the Internet. It remains unsure, whether the oppositions and antagonism could be overcome. However, INCH gives a perspective of how these problems could be tried to be resolved, and on the other hand, how socio-semiotic approach could be used in order to specify the problems of other political systems as well.

8.2 Political Culture Produced in Circular Relations

In this study, I have analyzed INCH as a nodal point, where public institutions confront young people. I can draw an outline of the story of INCH, although the story varies depending on the actual young people sitting in the middle of it. The young person in the position of potential participator decides, whether the story ever reaches its end point, or turns into a quasi- or pseudo-narration.

Despite the societal nuances of the concept of democracy, it is rather cross-culturally a matter of manifestation of will or interest, as is politics in general. As I have already mentioned, it is impossible to find any solid constitution for the concept, and it functions only as long as its meaning is debated on (c.f. Butler & Laclau & Žižek 2000)⁶³. The oldest definitions of politics saw it as a game instead of social organization of a whole society, but what was central to it was trying to achieve one's interest in competition with others. After democratization and nationalization politics has remained its status as a manifestation of will, but with certain conditions of judging

⁶³ Rather I take a position where I consider how democracy is performed instead of answering to what are the right forms of democracy. In this sense, this study could be related to Callon's (1998) approach on economy for example.

the morality of this manifestation. The subject's to whom the will is being associated with vary depending on whether the Government, the civil society, or a single person is emphasized.

The production of the subject of will vary depending on whether private or public interest is emphasized. However, what is in the heart of all different theories is the will, and trying to articulate and set conditions to articulation of other subjects will. Political speeches often project the speaker image to the same world with the sender of the subject, who in turn is the object of political articulation. The distance between the sender and 'subject' is accomplished by using techniques of language, I have called veridictory modalities. The actual constraints set to subjects are drawn by exotactic modalities, namely allowances, prohibitions, etc. Therefore, the conditions for the actualization of one's will are set by others. The sender's own interests behind the 'public interest' or 'common good' remains hidden and hard to debate on and the 'truth' constituting the society and political culture is unquestioned. Yet the role of the sender could be taken by a single person, who would gain some delegated power, while hiding it behind the concept of 'democracy'. For example, in the case of INCH it happens, while a conformist young is educating others.

Civic skills or democracy education concentrates in citizens' abilities of looking at them from outside. Civic education provides the know-how one needs in order to understand what kind of will can and should be publicly manifested and articulated in prevalent narrations. Simultaneously, the know-how as such becomes a central symbol constituting the truth of the society and starts to circulate in political discourses, by turning civic skills education into civic education. The enunciation of the system, not just the utterance or surface, is the other side of the coin always present in civic education. Depending on the educator's modal valuation regarding the system civic education can be called critical or not.

Construction of public will is a question of controlling the rules according to which it is decided whose will becomes articulated and whose will doesn't. In the story of politics, the abilities (exotactic) and know how (endotactic) create the actual plane of possibilities in which the quality of a certain interest is evaluated. This plane of possibilities could be a question of truth (separate from one) or a question of certainty. The enunciation of politics is what remains hidden on the surface, but which can be reproduced by a person in order to relegitimize the political order, for example by saying that 'young people have to act within the limits of the system even if willing to change it'. Politics can be questioned by looking at the prevalent political enunciation as an outsider, considering the system of 'them' rather than the nation of 'ours'. From this perspective such counter democratic jokes, such as the one concerning Ismo Laitela, become understandable.

From a performative perspective, the question about in how 'good democracy' people live in, is not to be evaluated by any particular indicators, but by different actors' faith in the success of democracy. It derives from believing in people's own actions and knowing that the others have acted under the same rules that are justifiable. What makes a political system or a political project successful, is not measured by any 'objective' measures or even by the ambitions of people in the

first place, but by the consensus of the different actors who have authorization to judge it (Mosse 2005, 156–172). Often the success of a project is not judged by all, but the quiet voices of silenced people form a manifestation of the failure of the hegemonic system to hear them. The character of a political culture is based on different values claiming the truth about what is democratic, and these values are usually not negotiated by the undermined minorities of the society, the socially excluded.

In Finland, political culture has traditionally been based on narrations stipulating veridictory modalities that describe the nation as the valuable and truthful, the ‘authentic’ popular subject. This has been building the idea of treating the true nation as the singular subject with one will⁶⁴. The system with its rules and laws has then been something that the people have been able to impose for themselves and then happily obey them (Stenius 1997, 170). What the interest of Finnish nation is and how the citizens should be, is a matter of a shared truth, a shared ‘peasant’ sense (common sense). Political actors have often identified themselves with the system, which enables them to justify actions with national interest. The subject of the nation occupies a hegemonic position, since usually the interests have been related to national forms of justification in order to justify any ‘private’ will of a single person.

This hegemonic circle formed by modalities among different actors can be clearly seen in INCH. The less conformist, but rather indifferent actors, not really treating the Finnish nation or its previous discourses as the hegemonic democratic subject, don’t become very interested in using INCH. They see other ways of democratic engagement more suitable than those supported by the Government such as INCH or youth councils. The “de-regulated Internet environment” as well as the international communication networks in general that especially young people have started using increasingly, help us understand, why the hegemonic position of Finnish nation, based on strong social control and obedience, is decreasing. This dislocation of the hegemonic discourse can be interpreted as at least one of the reasons for the inactivity in participation in conventional forms of politics. If the people on the side of the system cannot legitimize their truth of the nation in the eyes of young people, it can be critically opposed or treated indifferently. As other studies show, young people have become interested both in their ‘private’ interests and for example in global issues (e.g. Paakkunainen 2005a).

Young people split into loosely two categories. The others possess the truth of how people should be, and the others act within certain constrains. If the truth justifying constrains is not meaningful anymore, the rules really become constrains, and not what people happily obey. The governmentally oriented conceptions immanent to INCH are further amplifying the antagonism between the two sides of the split subject position of young people. They rather intensify the division, instead of making all young people equal subjects of participation. It is based on view points to hearing and participation that are disjoined from any particular subject positions. It helps a small

⁶⁴ The tendency is of course typical to nationalism in general, but in Finland, nationalism has been and sustained its strong positions firmly in comparison to other Nordic or Western countries (Saukkonen 2003, 14–16).

amount of young people to become oriented to engage in the institutional political sphere, whilst most young people are excluded with the failure to support substantial and equal dialogue with them. As a sincere try to connect the civil society of young people with the administrative institutions, there is a danger of antagonistically creating further division and opposition between these two spheres.

What else this splitting shows is that what is called the political system, i.e., the rules and regulations, is based on meaningful interaction between different people. I have therefore been able to show, that political borders and constraints have their basis in semiotic processes produced by different agents. In the end, although INCH as a 'system' or an Internet application structures behavior (that might reflect some valuations of agents such as developers or the Government), it is also the young people themselves, who put these constraints into action by controlling others. The quantitative data concerning different types of ideas, which is expressed in table 4 in Appendix 7, shows that different forms of political justification are clearly controlled by other users. Therefore my study also confirms the hypotheses of socio-semiotic theory pointing out how agencies and structures are always constructed in semiotic processes. I have also shown that the Laclau's and Mouffe's (2001) articulation theory can in the case of INCH be combined with socio-semiotic theory (Hodge & Kress 1988).

8.3 The Relations of this Study to General Discussions on Democracy

In comparison to more general discussion on democracy I have considered INCH, because it is rather simple as a social system but reflects the problems of interaction of multiple actors. In general, in the simplest conceptions of democracy the civil society and the state form a circle, but in the case of, the circle is broken down as the Government sends young people to do one thing, and young people, who are able to complete it, send the local administration towards another thing. All the actors, or the subject positions, are represented by some particular people or their associations, which made it possible to gather rather dense data from the most important actors.

The (semi-)circle of politics in INCH didn't turn out to be very successful from the point of view of most young people. The portion of young people, who got interested in using INCH in the first place, didn't for the most part believe in its possibilities, since the public administration as a subject sent by these young people often failed to answer their demands. Therefore, the will of the public administration wasn't suitably oriented in order to answer the demands of young people, and their ability to respond to and hear young people was questioned. However, the young people using INCH were getting other kind of feedback, and were building narrations that they could fit the prevailing political system into. This helped them to articulate their unjustified position in regard to municipal authorities. They were able to believe in the political system, even if they didn't believe in the chances of INCH in particular.

Participation, which the Government defines as the object of young people, is rather abstract, and contains a request for another actantial picture, which is the object the Government values. The

inner actantial model, signified by *participation*, could be the one, where young people send municipalities to fulfill their ideas, but also the one in which young people purchase the ‘Finnish cultural heritage’. Therefore, the creation of initiatives, which seems to be the object in the governmental narration about young people in the first place, is symbolically associated to the object of the truth constituting the Finnish nation. In the story of the indifferent young, this symbolic association doesn’t happen easily, which leads to disinterest in the whole thing. In the story of the conformist young, the symbolic association is suitably reproduced and the hidden curriculum of INCH succeeds. Namely, the belief in using INCH arises from an ability to have the nationally oriented truth present in the users’ narrations, which gives value for the whole system. It is the feeling of acting upon a public mandate that helps some young people to use INCH despite its current lack of empowerment. However, the ability to find this mandate meaningful benefits young people unequally and helps them further connect to the administration in the expense of others.

In general, democratic systems form similar cycles, where the sender is a citizen, who sends representatives to represent her, but the representatives again send the citizen to become a ‘good citizen’. There is an unlimited amount of different subject positions, whose stories should be realized adequately, for the cycle of politics to be accepted and supported by main portion of the civil society. Usually some truth constituting this justification is required (cf. Hodge & Kress 1988). By taking the socio-semiotic point of view, it seems inevitable that the Government should somehow resonate with the feelings and meanings arising from the civil society in order to sustain the functioning of the cycle. The belief provided by similarities of narrations turned out to be enough for making action meaningful in the context of INCH, but only for a small amount of people.

Pekonen (2003) suggests that a lack in legitimacy of the political system is one of the reasons why people are disinterested in regard to politics. Illegitimacy of public administration is often a consequence of an administration becoming bureaucratic and starting to keep itself as its own cause (Pekonen 1995, 5–7). The administration isn’t anymore sharing the same truth with the people and therefore failing to resonate with them. Either the administration has to alter its truth, or educate the people to share the same truth. If INCH is interpreted from this perspective, it can be argued that the real challenges of “hearing young people” are neglected if INCH is treated as a self-evident manifestation of hearing young people and treated as a device that should be “marketed” to young people without any self criticism or reflection.

If INCH is about answering to the legitimacy problem, it possesses a pitfall. Giving young people a picture that they are not really substantially heard, although they are given the channel to participate, can contribute to two things. It can teach them that politics is about one acting for itself and not about dealing with social problems. On the other hand, it can contribute to antagonist (for definition see section 2.5) tendencies to develop, while young people struggle over common identity as an answer to their subordinate position. If INCH was solely used in order to change

local things and hardly more than technical issues (that imply a subjectivity), it would fit very well with the critique of current political culture claiming that democracy is about being a client of the public administration (cf. Rantala & Sulkunen, edit., 2006, Rättälä 2001).

However, in connection with civic education, it might become a symbol having yet unexpected connotations. Young people can turn the picture upside down, and use INCH by other means, by expressing jokes etc. If reproduction of narrations of cultural truth itself already possesses renewing aspects in a changed context, opposing it might have yet much larger scale changes. There is always some reciprocity possessed by different actors, which can lead to a renewal of political culture to unexpected or even startling directions. In addition to the possibilities of counter democracy posed by Pierre Rosanvallon (2008), a critical approach taken by educators around INCH could further enhance the possibilities of change. However, the reshaping of the values and renewal of political culture is not an inevitable result of the splitting of young people.

8.4 Managed and Action Oriented Discourses

As I already mentioned, Lance Bennett (2008, 14, 21) points out that the research on youth engagement has been divided into two different paradigms, those of dutiful citizen and of actualising citizen. The dutiful citizen paradigm fits the ‘top-down’ view, which sees young people as the objects of civic education and engagement projects supported by the Government. The position is marked by exotactic modalities of having-to and ability. On the other hand, the paradigm of actualising citizen emphasizes the endotactic modalities, i.e., the ‘bottom-up’ perspective looked from the point of view of young person herself. As I have shown, from the point of view of hegemonic conception of democracy, it could be more useful to make the division differently between the people purchasing the hegemony, and those more indifferent to it.

I have tried to give a new point of view in order to answer the Bennett’s (2008, 21) proposal that academic research concerning youth engagement “in the digital age” should try to combine the two principles and aim “at identifying and assessing strategies of engagement that appeal to actualising citizens, while creating connections to government that help promote the dutiful citizen’s democratic ideals.” In the case of INCH, it is crucial to the co-operation of young people and the ‘top-down’ actors of the public administration that the subject positions created by ‘top-down’ expectations and ‘bottom-up’ personal interest chime, in order to inspire different actors for fruitful collaboration. Because the socio-semiotic method turns out helpful in understanding the problems INCH is facing with, the socio-semiotic tools could be used in other democracy analyses as well. In fact, the socio-semiotic approach contributes to not seeing the civil society and the Government in a pre-established vertical relationship, but how the Government and citizens as actors are created in discursive processes. In this sense, the administrative or ‘top-down’ accounts often see human behaviour from the exogenous, outside perspective instead of giving the real agency to the members of the civil society.

Especially, when different generations confront each other, and hegemonic discourses are dislocated, or prevailing conceptions are called into question, many problems arise that are not easy to interpret just by pointing one's eyes on the superficial surface of how things appear. Instead, since we all live in a certain cultural hegemony or tradition, we have to constantly criticise traditional conceptions in order to better understand the world we live in. Without ever being able to cross the boundaries of discourses (cf. Sulkunen 1997), we can try to discursively understand the world so that a wider piece of it could be articulated and taken as a part of discourses. We have to admit our limits but also admit the distress some people live in, although too weak to say it loud. This kind of recognition could be a path to a world of broader freedom.

INCH on its own is also an interesting opening in the direction connecting the managed and user oriented types of using the Internet (e.g. Coleman 2008). I have been rather critical of its properties, but it represents a new kind of thinking, which tries to connect civil society based web-practices with the municipal administrations in a way rather new to the discipline. It offers a link to municipal administrations almost unimaginable to the young people of previous decades. It makes anonymous expressions possible, if young people are concerned about issues too sensitive to express with their own name. This makes it possible for young people to discuss and express themselves more openly than before, although the discussion possibilities of INCH could be advanced much further.

The openness also brings its opposite, because it helps to create a certain type of political culture praising for some issues and opposing others. It might also filter some more sensitive ideas because of the fear of how they are admitted. Therefore, hearing young people, no matter how sublime it appears, contains several dangers. If the subject of hearing is not clearly articulated, and if young people's participation is not supported by adults, it can lead to an illusion of hearing young people and to an antagonism between them. These problems should be taken into account in any discussions on democracy, but especially in the ones concerning young people, who also need help by their adult fellows. The tools that young people are provided with should not help them to classify each other to separate groups, but help them to be in an equal dialogue with each other and with adults. If democratic values are taken as granted, there is always the chance of unconscious inequality between people under the certain system.

9 *Discussion: Representing Democracy or Democratic Representation?*

The aim of this chapter is to connect this study to different societally important discussions. In this chapter I discuss the study and conclusions expressed in the previous chapter in relation to some large scale political struggles and discourses. First, I will discuss how problematic the meaning of young people's participation is. Then I will discuss about the current possibilities of democracy in general and especially connected to eDemocracy that has become almost a new paradigm in more 'network oriented' societies. I will finally discuss the possibility of renewing political culture to a more dialogic direction. In the end, despite being a new way of organising democracy, it is still the same old problems of democracy that can be found from INCH as well.

It turned out that young people's 'participation' is a rather empty concept with only some indefinite associations that are indeterminately articulated. However, the Youth Policy Program addresses 'comprehensive participation' as one of the main goals of the program. Like I have already argued, there is something deeper going on behind the surface of Finnish eDemocracy applications than voting turnouts or educating so called 'civic skills'. Young people's participation is emphasized being important for the success of Finnish nation in global competition. What is symbolizing the global environment in the Youth Policy Program is the Internet, which insists on to become used in solving the problems of 'participation'.

For example INCH shows that political forms of the Net often form a strict system and territorialized institutional connections despite the fact that the network is often marketed as something more open and liberating. Furthermore, the concept of network is often connected with new interpretations of capitalism, the 'global' society, and also with Finnish knowledge society. In Finland, eDemocracy that refers to applications supporting citizen engagement is called 'network democracy' (*verkko-demokratia*). In the core of INCH there are different politico-social struggles between different age cohorts, but also between Finland and the 'global context'. To understand its meaning I cannot restrict to only seeing what happens within it, but it has to be related to these larger political discussions.

9.1 Why — Overdetermination in the Core of Political Struggles

I have mainly considered how the political culture of INCH turns out to be in different narrations. Although scientifically any wider interpretations are problematic, I have taken a pragmatic stand in order to understand how the political culture in INCH turns out as it does, namely how its properties are produced in narrations. To answer why it has turned out as such, I cannot consider only narrations. Although it is not possible to really solve this problem, I want to open discussion towards one interpretation of political struggles.

I have kept the Lacan's and Mouffe's (2001) discourse theory as a pragmatic tool alongside with the socio-semiotic approach. What is central to their theory is its Lacanian core leaning towards

the concept of *overdetermination*. It denotes the underlying process behind of all social processes, where symbols are not taken only as a symbol of their immediate ‘meaning’ but they start symbolizing something different. They become connoted with domains contingent and exterior to the immediate ‘meaning’. Similar looking or sounding symbols referring to different things might become contingently mixed so that the originally different meanings become identified. In the Lacanian theory it is the struggle over identity that is presupposed and the cause of the sign. The socialization processes and formation of meaning are based on these contingent extensions of connotations that derive from struggles craving for an identity.

As I have shown, the concepts of hearing and participation turned out rather elusive. After transformation and nominalization of these concepts, the actors to attribute as causes of the transitions behind these concepts were hidden, contrariwise to saying that “municipal administration hears young people” or that “young people participate in municipal planning”. In the material I have studied, these concepts seem to mean something much more than these two sentences. In the end, they form a dualistic couple connecting the ‘action’ of young people in the form of participation and the ‘action’ of society or the administration in the form of hearing. Therefore, it is possible to find the struggle over identities behind these concepts in the core of the political (semi-)circle of INCH.

In the case of *participation*, as I showed in chapter 5, comprehensive *participation* was defined as one of the largest issues with young people’s political engagement. Under this same concept, eDemocratic web communities were associated to the voting turnouts etc. Therefore there was something more beyond the chatting about ‘civic skills’ and ‘media literacy’. Namely, participation means something else than just young people taking part with some conventional methods. Finnish society is based on universality principle meaning inclusion of all to the common ‘Gemeinschaft’, which is not constituted from variation of subcultures, but from the quite singular culture shared by almost all participating people. It is based on shared judgment of common sense, i.e., ‘peasant sense’ in the old peasant culture (Stenius 1997, 171). Therefore, participation does not mean only the young people’s use of certain tools, but participation in sharing common sense and values. Hope to make all young people use INCH derives from the principle of universal inclusion. Yet, one person’s use of INCH is often overdetermined to mean inclusion of young people as a class or as a generation in the sense of a Gemeinschaft.

The concept of *hearing* on the other hand is something required by senders of the “global” environment. In association with the universalist conception of participation, it is however transformed to better fit the forms of inclusion, universality, and conformity, which are typical principles of Finnish society. The concept of hearing means forms of inclusion and formation of young people as a Gemeinschaft based on shared values, instead of empowering individual young people. This is established by symbolizing INCH as a ‘web community’ revealing the new phenomena of youth culture coming from the global environment. Hearing mixed to the concept of

participation and civic education is based on the prevalent values and 'peasant sense' of what kind of participation is acceptable and desirable.

Young people, who are interested in the regime of 'politics', such as youth councils and INCH, who take it as a web community, are given the position of representing 'all' young people. They make all young people into their own cause. They both start to educate other young people and reproduce the governmental discourse by circulating the truth of youth. But as they classify all young people under the same subject position with help of the general youth discourse, they overdetermine the meaning of hearing one young person's idea in INCH, to mean hearing of young people as a class with a shared identity. Therefore, for the sake of the class, the 'less serious users' are opposed in the pressure to have the 'collective message' heard, the message claiming that young people as a collective is equal to that of adults. It is this 'collective message', which is the overdetermination of the meaning of every single idea expressed in INCH.

Overdetermination is only natural and of course not a problem from the outset. Under the Finnish hegemony it however happens under the eyes of the 'active users of INCH', who are able to distinct themselves with certain Fennoman cultural capital. However, if I assume as many studies suggest (e.g. Paakkunainen 2005b; Suoranta 2005) that due to global pressures youth culture is in transition, which the hegemonic universality principle of conformity and inclusion is unable to treat, subcultures might turn into oppositions among young people. Oppositions could lead a few of them to gain more power, but diminish the possibilities of others if these oppositions are not resolved by comprehensive articulation. Therefore, from the point of view of civic justification emphasizing the importance of equal right to power and voice, the justification of INCH, which represents only a minority, becomes questionable.

9.2 eDemocracy: to Whose Benefit?

Another discussion, which I would like to approach from the perspective of my study, is the one that concerns the possibilities of the so called 'network society' suggested for example by Manuel Castells and especially by Pekka Himanen in Finland. Finland has started identifying it as a 'knowledge society' and the Internet has been interpreted as a miraculous solution to many societal problems. Network has elevated different kind of hopes such as giving everybody an access to political arena. However, based on this study, I claim that they are far from being free of exploitation and problems of asymmetric share of information etc. As a new aspect, the possibility of anonymity offers a specific possibility of eDemocracy, as one doesn't have to fear of neglecting self-image associated to the singular institutionalized personality. This could have both positive and negative consequences for democratic tools. Overall, it is questionable, whether the communication channel on the Internet could help young people in their struggle for power if their subordinate position is not resolved in the society otherwise.

INCH is a good example of how a 'network' based solution, which is claimed to be open for all, is rather strictly associated with many institutional entities and limitations. As I have exhibited,

there are several ways in which different border fences step into the culture of INCH, which help in establishing several forms of symbolic and structural control. Yet INCH is not only an Internet application, but a brand, a sign, a nodal point, and a movement, which signifies socially important values of knowledge society of the Finnish people. The Government and municipalities use INCH for legitimatizing their own system, but for civic educational purposes as well. Young people rather 'indifferent' to political system use it occasionally to express their ideas as a basis for new projects created by the municipalities or other institutions, whilst the young people, who are more identified with INCH and other forms of conventional youth participation, use INCH to strengthen the idea of young people as a collective or a class confronted with the municipal administration and its adult representatives. They try to strengthen their own identities, to multiply their connections with different institutions and to have their private voice heard. They try to claim the representation of young people in general by using the service.

Therefore, democratic justification based on principle of universal inclusion of all people becomes questionable in the case of INCH, since young people lack the social or cultural capital in order to cope with the right and appropriate 'style' of using INCH. On the other hand, commenting and voting phases that are restrictive for the success of initiatives, form tests to initiatives claiming to be based on the democratic justification. In some respects, making INCH a movement among young people might seem an ideal state from the point of view of connecting state oriented action and actionist forms of action (Bennett 2008). It is however problematic and raises the question of asymmetric distribution of power among citizens. INCH engages mainly young people able to use some narrations typical to Fennoman political culture, by transforming them in the use in more knowledge oriented society, in order to help benefit few young people but possibly even exploit the more indifferent young people.

While criticizing INCH for its unequal tendencies, I am not so naïve to claim that equality would ever be comprehensively established in any existing democracy, but I claim that the issue of justification of democracy on the Internet is one of the central problems of eDemocracy, not only from the perspective of digital divide based on variation in 'digital' economic, cultural, and social capital, but because eDemocracy incorporates a mixture of different discourses all having their own taste of judgment. At least in the case of INCH, same thing goes with youth participation, because oppositions of young people and grown-ups is apt to lead to antagonist tendencies and political struggles, where equal access to participate is outstripped by identities constructed by few. In a network of multiple actor groups and displacements there is an enormous range of different discursive formations behind the visible discussions. It is possible that the constraints of democratic justification become blurred and hidden contributing negatively to principles of equality.

It is worth noting however, that for example the liquidity of identities possible to form on the Internet could liberate from some identity constraints typical to traditional forms of politics. Therefore the Internet could in best case contest the necessity of competition and agonism in the

core of politics as is claimed in Chantal Mouffe's (1999) theory of agonist pluralism. Other forms of play such as mimicry, contingency, and vertigo (cf. Caillois 2001, 11–36; Salen & Zimmerman 2006, 128, 148) could be seen as equal parts of politics if agonist aspects could be decreased by fluctuating identities. For this to occur it seems that the control in online democracy forums should be working differently in order to diminish rather than amplify antagonist tendencies. The Internet makes it possible to overcoming taboos and discomfiture typical to politics in face-to-face environments. For it the rational bias discounting the importance of different communicative modes such as affective, poetic, humorous, and ironic communication, should be avoided in order to purchase the possibilities (cf. Dahlgren 2007, 156). The overtly exercised control in INCH tends to diminish these possibilities. Deliberation should be more open, and agonist tendencies should be taken into account, while moderating the deliberation occurring online. I suggest that the agonist tendencies could be overcome by allowing affections, humor, and irony to be expressed. However, so far 'top-down' e-governmental services haven't been able to purchase these possibilities but have got caught on administrative rigidities.

9.3 Critical Pedagogy as an Intervention

The concept of education is very central to INCH and its background discourses. As I showed already, the Youth Policy Program is associating democratic participation and media literacy skills directly with the concept of civic skills education⁶⁵. If the actors behind the creation of the moderating of and marketing of INCH, would start to reflect upon their own conceptions of Finnish society, normative accounts on democracy, and good life, INCH could help in gaining much longer term results.

As I showed in the 6th chapter, the moderators don't take very critical attitude towards youth engagement, but it is seen as a technical problem of how to provide young people the know-how enabling them to participate with rather conventional methods. This perspective incorporates a quite strong political message of what are the right ways of political engagement. In teaching the possible stories of politics, and transforming the utterance describing political tools, the teacher simultaneously educates a certain enunciation of politics, which sees the hegemony either well constituted or fragile, possible to change or stationary. The education sees the hegemony as an outside truth impossible to change is *politicized education*, whilst if the hegemony is seen as something possible to change, it is about *political education* to use concepts by McLaren and Giroux (1993). In the case of INCH, education usually turns out to be politicized rather than political.

In a radical conception of democracy it is part of people's life-style and culture. It implants on them the conceptions of good life, critical thinking, and citizenship. These concepts however have to be politically reflected and politicized. (Tomperi & Piattoeva 2005, 248, 253.) Recognizing the

⁶⁵ The importance of civic skills education is not attributed only in the Youth Policy Program but for example by Ministry of Justice (2009).

hidden politics and civic education of INCH would require political cognition and interpretation skills from young people. School education should provide young people chances of understanding political instead of reproducing it (Tomperi & Piattoeva 2005, 255). As issues dealt in INCH are often quite superficial and technical, it is about teaching young people that they have come to politically ready-made world. The content of civic education is often rather depolitical. In today's Finnish civic education concepts, such as entrepreneurship, are emphasized and given the status quo instead of critically reflecting them (Tomperi & Piattoeva 2005, 260–264.) Related to INCH, the disrespect for young people's own position as the changers of the society and its values, has turned out to be at least one of the reasons, why so few young people have responded to the ambitions of 'top-down' democracy education.

Paulo Freire's (2005) conception of dialogism could be an answer to the problem. Especially school teachers and youth workers 'marketing' INCH could take a more dialogic position in relation to young people. Dialogism is seen as an opposite to authoritarian and unidirectional teaching that has acquired a prevailing status in school teaching in many countries, but especially Finland (Vuorikoski & Kiilakoski 2005, 309). A teacher should rather be confronting the conventional ways of thinking, but unconditionally respect the young people's need of humanity (Vuorikoski & Kiilakoski 2005, 322). As I already suggested, young people could be treated by moderators as people, who need respect for their opinions, rather than ones, who have to be unidirectionally taught the 'truth' and conventional ways of participation by enforcing them to try INCH. This dialogism could then open space for sincere interaction between the teachers and young people, where the issues such as what makes INCH worth or non-worth trying, could be articulated.

Seeing the marketing of INCH as a sole transformation of skills required to use INCH narrows the subjectivity of both the educators and young people. Contrariwise, INCH could be used in education by not judging it beforehand but by creating discussion, whether it is a good system or not. What kind of problems a democracy model like the one posed by INCH does have? In what sense the system is good and what kind of cultural norms it presupposes? What could be other ways to connect the political institutions with young people? In what sense the dialogue between the institutions and young people in form posed by INCH is justified, and what are its limits? What are the limitations are put in their democratic engagement?

By asking this kind of reflective and critical questions the educators, the youth workers, and teachers, could widen their own subjectivity and stop working only as a mediating factor between the governmental discourses and young people. Following Henry A. Giroux and Peter McLaren (1992) critical discourse theory, studied especially by the educators instead of scholars, could be used in order to consider and widen the subjective possibilities of the educators. According to them, the prevalent educational practices are based on principles that don't lead to thinking about the relation between language, national identity, culture, and literacy (Giroux & McLaren 1992, 9). Teachers and students are provided subject positions that restrict the possibilities to interpret

the world, which governs the accessibility of certain subjectivities (Giroux & McLaren 1992, 22). If the moderators are, for example, required to teach the skills needed for using INCH, they might feel not being permitted to or may lack the education required for taking a more critical position. They might not understand the meaning of national identity and national forms of politics themselves, which makes them contribute contributing to reproduction of hegemonic structures hidden in cultural conceptions appearing inevitable to most of us.

I haven't analysed INCH's democratic possibilities by starting from any pregiven conception of democracy. I think the final evaluation should be given to all young people. However, INCH lacks the channel in which its own status could be evaluated. These issues aren't generally raised by educators either. Therefore, it seems justifiable to criticize INCH and its marketing for the lack in the possibilities for the critique towards the system itself. Without saying anything more about what a 'good democratic system' is, I claim that it should always provide the possibilities to articulate self criticism toward the system itself. At least not all education is non-reflective, however, as the following quote shows.

'Changing the World is impossible, everyone knows that. But then came the people, who didn't know this, and changed the world!' [MF26b.]

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Appendices

Appendix 1. The Online Form Directed to Moderators⁶⁶.

Covering Letter to the Form and Given to Interviewees

Dear youth work specialist and a moderator of the Initiative Channel!

I am doing research for my Master's thesis in the Department of Sociology in the University of Helsinki. The research concerns eDemocracy in Finland and my specific case is the Initiative Channel (www.aloitekanava.fi) Internet-portal. Along with my sociology studies I have been working for Ponsi Interactive Ltd as a technical developer for the Initiative Channel. While doing the work I was interested in the possibilities of the service to support young people's participation and I chose it as the subject of my thesis.

By answering to the form you will greatly support the development of municipal democracy and youth work. You will also support research on the problems of democracy. As a professional youth worker your opinion about young people's participation possibilities is especially valuable. This form has been sent to all moderators of Initiative Channel. After I have finished the study, you will have an opportunity to read and comment about it.

The answers to this form are confidential and the results produced from the answers are going to be expressed in the research report in such a way that single moderators are not identifiable. Furthermore, individualisable data is not going to be given to any third party such as municipalities, National Coordination and Development Centre of Youth Information and Counselling Services, or Ponsi Interactive Ltd. More particular information is to be found in the register description.

It is not mandatory to fill out all fields, but it is important for the research to give as comprehensive answers as possible. It takes about 30 to 40 minutes to fill out the form.

Thank you for participating!

BSocSc Antti Veilahti

Form

1. Background information

Year of Birth

Gender

A degree related to youth work you have studied (and is it finished)?

If you have some other degree, which?

In what posts have you worked in youth work?

E-mail address?

Home municipality in Initiative Channel?

Estimate how many times you have done the following things:

How many young people using Initiative Channel you have met in reality?

How many users you know outside the service?

From how many municipalities you know other moderators?

How many years of experience you have in youth work?

2. Experiences as a moderator

How many months have you acted as a moderator to Initiative Channel?

How many times you have done the following things (Not at all, 1–2, 3–5, 6–9, At least 10):

How many ideas have you moved directly to the following phase?

How many ideas have you made into initiatives?

How many comments have you hidden?

How many initiatives have you sent forward to different decision makers?

⁶⁶ The original form was in Finnish and the translation is my free translation.

Give an example of a good idea you have moderated, and which you have treated as appropriate and possible to accomplish?

Give an example of an idea you think is appropriate, but not possible to accomplish. How did you act upon such idea?

What kind of possibilities you have used for forwarding ideas, and how effective have you found the different ways?

According to the guide of Initiative Channel, a moderator can move an inappropriate idea directly to the follow phase and / or modify the idea. Give an example of an inappropriate idea. How did you act upon it and how did you explain its inappropriateness?

What do you think about jokes in Initiative Channel, such as that TV-character Ismo Laitela should become the president? How do you think this kind of ideas should be dealt with?

3. Initiative Channel as a service

Do you agree with the following claims?

(1: I fully disagree, 2: I partly disagree, 3: I don't agree nor disagree, 4: I partly agree, 5: I fully agree)

1. In Initiative Channel young people can affect things they feel important
2. Initiative Channel has increased young people's interest in participation
3. Ideas expressed in Initiative Channel are mostly good
4. The service reaches young people, who wouldn't otherwise participate in the development of their municipality
5. Ideas have good chances of succeeding in my municipality.
6. There are enough possibilities to discuss issues in Initiative Channel
7. The most important reason to use Initiative Channel is to be able to affect to concrete things
8. Initiative Channel has made young people's chances in influencing things better
9. Initiatives in Initiative Channel have affected to municipal politic
10. Demonstrations are a good way to influence.
11. Boycotts are a good way to influence.
12. In my opinion law shouldn't be broken in order to influence things.
13. Voting is a good way to influence.
14. Non-voting is a good way to influence.

4. Young people's changes of participation

What do you think are good ways young people can use in order to influence things?

What kind of ways they should avoid using?

How well Initiative Channel has contributed to young people's possibilities in influencing municipal issues?

To what kind of issues you think young people are willing to influence and do you think Initiative Channel makes it possible to affect such things?

How seriously municipal decision makers take young people's ideas and how well they react to them?

Did you vote in municipal elections 2008? If you did, which party?

5. Initiative Channel

What kind of young people typically use the service?

How students or young people visiting demonstrations of Initiative Channel have interpreted it?

What kind of problems have occurred in these occasions and how have you solved them?

What makes a young person to start using the service?

Do young people understand participation the same way you do? Is it easy to make them become excited about it?

6. Finally

How could Initiative Channel be improved?

What else would you like to say about the service or young people or how things are in the world?

What important issues were left out in this form? How could it be improved?

Thank you for participating! Your answers are valuable and support the development of e- and youth democracy. Have a good summer!

Appendix 2. Outline of the Questions Used in Thematic Interview of Moderators⁶⁷

General issues about the Initiative Channel

How could Initiative Channel be improved?

Evaluate following claims:

- In Initiative Channel young people can affect things they feel important
- Initiative Channel has increased young people's interest in participation
- Ideas expressed in Initiative Channel are mostly good
- The service reaches young people, who wouldn't otherwise participate in the development of their municipality
- Ideas have good chances of succeeding in my municipality.
- There are enough possibilities to discuss issues in Initiative Channel
- The most important reason to use Initiative Channel is to be able to affect to concrete things
- Initiative Channel has made young people's chances in influencing things better
- Initiatives in Initiative Channel have affected to municipal politic
- Demonstrations are a good way to influence.
- Boycotts are a good way to influence.

Moderation process

What kind of possibilities you have used for forwarding ideas, and how effective have you found the different ways?

Give an example of a good idea you have moderated, and which you have treated as appropriate and possible to accomplish?

Give an example of an idea you think is appropriate, but not possible to accomplish. How did you act upon such idea?

What are the most important reasons if an idea is not sent forward?

Give an example of an inappropriate idea. How did you act upon it and how did you explain its inappropriateness?

What do you think about jokes in Initiative Channel, such as that TV-character Ismo Laitela should become the president? How do you think this kind of ideas should be dealt with?

Young people's chances of participation

What you were told about democracy and the possibilities of Initiative Channel as a political tool, while you were trained to become a moderator?

What do you think are good ways young people can use in order to influence things?

What kind of ways they should avoid using?

How well Initiative Channel has contributed to young people's possibilities in influencing municipal issues?

To what kind of issues you think young people are willing to influence and do you think Initiative Channel makes it possible to affect such things?

How seriously municipal decision makers take young people's ideas and how well they react to them?

What kind of young people typically use the service?

How students or young people visiting demonstrations of Initiative Channel have interpreted it?

What kind of problems have occurred in these occasions and how have you solved them?

What makes a young person to start using the service?

Do young people understand participation the same way you do? Is it easy to make them become excited about it?

Finally

How could Initiative Channel be improved?

What else would you like to say about the service or young people or how things are in the world?

What important issues were left out in this form? How could it be improved?

⁶⁷ The original questions were written in Finnish and the translation is my free translation.

Appendix 3. The Online Form Directed to Young People⁶⁸.

Covering Letter to the Form and Given to Interviewees

Dear user of Initiative Channel!

I am a 24 year old sociology student and I am writing my degree work about Initiative Channel. I got interested in the service and about what kind of chances the service has in supporting young people's participation.

By answering to the form you will be able to bring forth your views and opinions anonymously concerning how young people would like to influence in things and how their chances could be enhanced. Your views can therefore be taken into account while developing services such as Initiative Channel.

I believe that as a young person you know the best how you want to participate. That's why it is of crucial importance to hear your honest stand on the following issues. The answers to the form are anonymous and confidential, and good answers are such how you feel yourself despite other people expectations.

If you give your email-address, you will be able to explore the study and comment about it after I have finished it. The answers to the form are confidential and the results are shown in such a way that any single respondent is impossible to identify. Identifiable information is not going to be given to any third party such as municipalities, National Coordination and Development Centre of Youth Information and Counselling Services, or Ponsi Interactive Ltd.

You don't have to fill out all of the fields, but it is crucial for my study that you give as comprehensive answers as possible. It takes about 15 to 20 minutes to answer to the form.

Thank you!

BSocSc Antti Veilahti

1. Background information

Year of birth

Gender

E-mail address

Home municipality in Initiative Channel

How many users of Initiative Channel you know personally?

Have you ever participated in:

student body

youth council

action organized by a political party or a political group

demonstration

election

If you answered yes to any of the questions, you can tell more comprehensively in what situation and how you felt about it?

2. Using of Initiative Channel

How many months have you used Initiative Channel?

How many times you have done the following things:

How many ideas have you posted?

How many comments have you written?

How many times have you voted about an initiative?

How many times a month you visit Initiative Channel website?

3. The content of Initiative Channel

I would like you to answer the following questions as honestly and comprehensively as possible. The best answers are based on how You feel!

⁶⁸ The original form was in Finnish and the translation is my free translation.

Give an example of a good idea that has been expressed in Initiative Channel? What made the idea especially good?

What kind of ideas you think have been inappropriate or such, that they should not have been expressed in Initiative Channel?

What kind of issues would you like to influence in local level or in the world, but you feel that Initiative Channel is not the right place to express those?

Do you like funny ideas or have you expressed that kind of ideas yourself? What do you think about the idea that Ismo Laitela from Salatut elämät should become the president?

4. Evaluate the following claims

Do you agree with the following claims:

(1: I fully disagree, 2: I partly disagree, 3: I don't agree nor disagree, 4: I partly agree, 5: I fully agree)

1. Initiative Channel has increased my interest in participation
2. I can affect things I feel important in Initiative Channel
3. Without Initiative Channel I would not participate in the development of my municipality.
4. Ideas have good chances of succeeding in my municipality.
5. Initiative Channel has increased my possibilities to influence in things.
6. There are enough possibilities to discuss issues in Initiative Channel
7. The most important reason to use Initiative Channel is to be able to affect to concrete things.
8. Demonstrations are a good way to influence.
9. Boycotts are a good way to influence.
10. In my opinion law shouldn't be broken in order to influence things.
11. Voting is a good way to influence.
12. Non-voting is a good way to influence.

5. Other questions about Initiative Channel and participation

I would like you to answer the following questions as honestly and comprehensively as possible. The best answers are those how you feel, not how you think you are expected to answer!

What are good ways to participate and what kind of ways should not be used?

What made you use Initiative Channel?

What kind of thoughts have come to your mind when Initiative Channel has been introduced to you by your teacher or by a youth worker? Do you think that they understand how and with what you would like to participate with?

Finally, you can freely tell, what sucks in Initiative Channel, politics, or in the world in general?

What important things were left out in this form? How could it be improved?

Thank you for participating!

Appendix 4. Outline of the Questions Used in Thematic Interview of Young People⁶⁹

Using of Initiative Channel

How long have you used Initiative Channel?
How often do you use Initiative Channel?
In what kind of youth work have you participated in?
What do you think about youth workers?

The ideas of Initiative Channel

Give an example of a good idea that has been expressed in Initiative Channel? What made the idea especially good?
What kind of ideas you think have been inappropriate or such, that they should not have been expressed in Initiative Channel?
Do you like funny ideas or have you expressed that kind of ideas yourself? What do you think about the idea that Ismo Laitela from Salatut elämät should become the president?

The process of Initiative Channel

What kind of problems do you think there is in the moderation of Initiative Channel?
What kind of issues would you like to influence in local level or in the world, but you feel that Initiative Channel is not the right place to express those?
Why do you think Initiative Channel is not a good place to express those?
Do you like funny ideas such as Ismo Laitela becoming the president?
Have you expressed something funny yourself and what did you like most?
What is fun with Initiative Channel in general?
Would you like to have better discussion possibilities in Initiative Channel?

Participation on the Internet

What kind of websites you usually visit on the Internet? In what kind of situations you use Initiative Channel?
Compare Initiative Channel to other websites you frequently use.
How much you read other people's ideas?
Is anonymity helping to express ideas?
Do you concern a lot before writing an idea or a comment to Initiative Channel?

Interest in politics

What made you use Initiative Channel?
What is interesting about politics?
Do you support any political party?
Has Initiative Channel contributed to your interest in participation and politics? To what kind?

Finally

What are good ways to participate and what kind of ways should not be used?
What made you use Initiative Channel?
What kind of thoughts have come to your mind when Initiative Channel has been introduced to you by your teacher or by a youth worker? Do you think that they understand how and with what you would like to participate with?
Finally, you can freely tell, what sucks in Initiative Channel, politics, or in the world in general?
What important things were left out in this form? How could it be improved?

⁶⁹ The original form questions were in Finnish and the translation is my free translation.

Appendix 5. Quantitative description of data collected from young people.

		Gender		
		Female	Male	All
Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	5 63 %	3 38 %	8 100 %
	Young people using INCH for at least a month	8 89 %	1 11 %	9 100 %
	Total	13 76 %	4 24 %	17 100 %

Table 1. Gender among young people responding online or being interviewed.

		Age				
		14 - 15	16 - 17	18 - 20	21 and older	All
Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	2 25 %	1 13 %	2 25 %	1 13 %	8 100 %
	Young people using INCH for at least a month	3 30 %	5 50 %	2 20 %	0 0 %	10 100 %
	Total	5 28 %	6 33 %	4 22 %	1 6 %	18 100 %

Table 2. Age among young people responding to online form or being interviewed.

				Answer			
				Not agree	Not agree nor disagree	Agree	All
Question	1. Initiative Channel has increased my interest in participation	Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	1 13 %	2 25 %	5 63 %	8 100 %
			Young people using INCH for at least a month	2 22 %	2 22 %	5 56 %	9 100 %
			Total	3 18 %	4 24 %	10 59 %	17 100 %
	2. I can affect things I feel important in Initiative Channel	Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	0 0 %	2 25 %	6 75 %	8 100 %
			Young people using INCH for at least a month	3 33 %	1 11 %	5 59 %	9 100 %
			Total	3 18 %	3 18 %	11 65 %	17 100 %
	3. Without Initiative Channel I would not participate in the development of my municipality.	Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	1 13 %	2 25 %	5 63 %	8 100 %
			Young people using INCH for at least a month	3 33 %	5 56 %	1 11 %	9 100 %
			Total	4 24 %	7 41 %	6 36 %	19 100 %
	4. Ideas have good chances of succeeding in my municipality.	Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	4 50 %	3 38 %	1 13 %	8 100 %
			Young people using INCH for at least a month	3 33 %	4 44 %	2 22 %	9 100 %
			Total	7 41 %	7 41 %	3 18 %	17 100 %
	5. Initiative Channel has increased my possibilities to influence in things.	Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	2 27 %	4 57 %	1 14 %	7 100 %
			Young people using INCH for at least a month	3 33 %	1 11 %	5 56 %	9 100 %
			Total	5 31 %	5 31 %	6 38 %	16 100 %
		Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	2 25 %	2 25 %	4 50 %	8 100 %
			Young people using INCH for at least a month	2 22 %	1 11 %	6 67 %	9 100 %
			Total	5 24 %	4 18 %	10 59 %	17 100 %
	6. There are enough possibilities to discuss issues in Initiative Channel	Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	2 25 %	2 25 %	4 50 %	8 100 %
			Young people using INCH for at least a month	1 11 %	1 11 %	7 78 %	9 100 %
			Total	3 18 %	3 18 %	11 65 %	17 100 %
	7. The most important reason to use Initiative Channel is to be able to affect to concrete things.	Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	2 25 %	2 25 %	4 50 %	8 100 %
			Young people using INCH for at least a month	1 11 %	1 11 %	7 78 %	9 100 %
			Total	3 18 %	3 18 %	11 65 %	17 100 %

			Answer			
			Not agree	Not agree	Not agree	All
8. Demonstrations are a good way to influence.	Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	3 38 %	1 13 %	4 50 %	8 100 %
		Young people using INCH for at least a month	2 22 %	2 22 %	5 56 %	9 100 %
		Total	5 29 %	3 18 %	9 53 %	17 100 %
9. Boycotts are a good way to influence.	Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	3 38 %	1 13 %	4 50 %	8 100 %
		Young people using INCH for at least a month	2 22 %	2 22 %	5 56 %	9 100 %
		Total	5 29 %	3 18 %	9 53 %	17 100 %
10. In my opinion law shouldn't be broken in order to influence things.	Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	0 0 %	3 38 %	5 63 %	8 100 %
		Young people using INCH for at least a month	3 33 %	3 33 %	3 33 %	9 100 %
		Total	3 18 %	6 35 %	8 47 %	17 100 %
11. Voting is a good way to influence.	Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	0 0 %	0 0 %	7 100 %	7 100 %
		Young people using INCH for at least a month	1 11 %	0 0 %	8 89 %	9 100 %
		Total	1 6 %	0 0 %	15 94 %	16 100 %
12. Non-voting is a good way to influence.	Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	7 88 %	0 0 %	1 13 %	8 100 %
		Young people using INCH for at least a month	9 100 %	0 0 %	0 0 %	9 100 %
		Total	16 94 %	1 0	1 6 %	17 100 %

Table 3. Opinions of new and long term users responding by online form.

				Answer				
				0	1	2	3	All
Question	1. How many ideas have you expressed in Initiative Channel?	Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	6 75 %	2 25 %	0 0 %	0 0 %	8 100 %
			Young people using INCH for at least a month	4 44 %	3 33 %	2 22 %	0 0 %	9 100 %
		Total		10 59 %	5 29 %	2 12 %	0 0 %	17 100 %
	2. How many comments have you posted in Initiative Channel?	Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	6 75 %	0 0 %	2 25 %	0 0 %	8 100 %
			Young people using INCH for at least a month	1 11 %	2 22 %	6 67 %	0 0 %	9 100 %
		Total		7 41 %	2 12 %	8 47 %	0 0 %	17 100 %
	3. How many times have you voted in Initiative Channel?	Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	5 63 %	2 25 %	1 13 %	0 0 %	8 100 %
			Young people using INCH for at least a month	0 0 %	2 22 %	6 67 %	1 11 %	9 100 %
		Total		5 29 %	4 24 %	7 41 %	1 6 %	17 100 %
	4. How many times a month you visit Initiative Channel?	Respondent group	Young people trying INCH	5 63 %	1 13 %	1 13 %	1 13 %	8 100 %
			Young people using INCH for at least a month	0 0 %	5 56 %	0 0 %	4 44 %	9 100 %
		Total		5 29 %	6 35 %	1 6 %	5 29 %	17 100 %

Table 4. Responding new and long term users experience of using the service.

	Component	
	Positivity about INCH	Actionism
Initiative Channel has increased my interest in participation	0,84	-0,09
I can affect things I feel important in Initiative Channel	0,75	-0,41
Ideas have good chances of succeeding in my municipality.	0,71	0,36
Initiative Channel has increased my possibilities to influence in things.	0,73	-0,01
Demonstrations are a good way to influence.	0,06	0,97
Boycotts are a good way to influence.	-0,13	0,97

Table 5. Factorial analysis on value questions expressed to young people (N=16).

		Factor	
User group		Positivity about INCH	Actionism
Respondents trying INCH	Mean	-0,10147	0,332935
	N	8	8
Respondents using INCH for longer term	Mean	0,101472	-0,33293
	N	8	8
Total	Mean	0	0
	N	16	16

Table 6. Means of value factors among new users and longer term users.

Appendix 6. Quantitative description of data collected from moderators.

	Gender		
	Female	Male	All
Moderators	15	3	18

Table 1. Gender distribution of responding moderators.

	Age					
	25 - 29	30 - 34	35 - 40	40 - 44	45 - 50	All
Moderators	8	4	2	0	3	18

Table 2. Age among responding or interviewed moderators.

		Opinion			
		Not agree	Not agree nor disagree	Agree	All
Question	1. In Initiative Channel young people can affect things they feel important	1 6 %	0 0 %	15 94 %	16 100 %
	2. Initiative Channel has increased young people's interest in participation	5 31 %	4 25 %	7 44 %	16 100 %
	3. Ideas expressed in Initiative Channel are mostly good	0 0 %	4 25 %	12 75 %	16 100 %
	4. The service reaches young people, who wouldn't otherwise participate in the development of their municipality	6 38 %	3 19 %	7 44 %	16 100 %
	5. Ideas have good chances of succeeding in my municipality.	4 25 %	6 38 %	6 38 %	16 100 %
	6. There are enough possibilities to discuss issues in Initiative Channel	5 31 %	4 25 %	7 44 %	16 100 %
	7. The most important reason to use Initiative Channel is to be able to affect to concrete things	0 0 %	4 25 %	12 75 %	16 100 %
	8. Initiative Channel has made young people's chances in influencing things better	2 13 %	2 13 %	12 75 %	16 100 %
	9. Initiatives in Initiative Channel have affected to municipal politics	6 38 %	6 38 %	4 25 %	16 100 %
	10. Demonstrations are a good way to influence.	5 31 %	3 19 %	8 50 %	16 100 %
	11. Boycotts are a good way to influence.	6 38 %	2 13 %	8 50 %	16 100 %
	12. In my opinion law shouldn't be broken in order to influence things.	1 6 %	4 25 %	11 69 %	16 100 %
	13. Voting is a good way to influence.	0 0 %	0 0 %	16 100 %	16 100 %
	14. Non-voting is a good way to influence.	15 94 %	1 6 %	0 0 %	16 100 %

Table 3. Value questions expressed to moderators.

Question	Figure				
	Min	Max	Median	Avg.	Std. Dev
How many users of Initiative Channel you have dealt with outside the service?	0	50	4	10,6	14,7
How many users you know outside the service?	0	30	6	8	9,3
In how many municipalities you know other moderators?	0	20	5,5	7,6	6,8
How many years you have experience of youth work?	0	25	4	5	6,1
How many months have you been moderating Initiative Channel?	0	12	5,5	6,6	4,2
How many [inappropriate] ideas have you moved directly to following phase?	0	10	1	2,8	3,7
How many ideas have you made into initiatives?	0	10	1	2,65	3,3
How many [inappropriate] comments have you hidden?	0	3	0	0,5	0,8
How many initiatives have you sent forward?	0	6	1	1,6	2,1

Table 4. Responding moderators experience of using the service (N = 16).

Appendix 7. Quantitative data describing data from Initiative Channel.

		Value					
		Median	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum	N
Logins	Users who tried Initiative Channel	1,0	1,7	1,4	1,0	15,0	1166,0
	Users who logged in during a period over 2 weeks	5,0	8,8	11,5	2,0	116,0	346,0
	All users	2,0	3,3	6,4	1,0	116,0	1512,0
Total number of characters used in all ideas and comments	Users who tried Initiative Channel	0,0	129,0	316,5	0,0	6104,0	1166,0
	Users who logged in during a period over 2 weeks	298,0	645,6	969,5	0,0	7742,0	346,0
	All users	26,0	247,2	582,2	0,0	7742,0	1512,0
Expressed Ideas	Users who tried Initiative Channel	0,0	0,3	0,7	0,0	10,0	1166,0
	Users who logged in during a period over 2 weeks	0,0	0,7	1,2	0,0	8,0	346,0
	All users	0,0	0,4	0,9	0,0	10,0	1512,0
Expressed Comments	Users who tried Initiative Channel	0,0	0,9	1,8	0,0	19,0	1166,0
	Users who logged in during a period over 2 weeks	1,5	3,1	4,4	0,0	27,0	346,0
	All users	0,0	1,4	2,8	0,0	27,0	1512,0
Votes	Users who tried Initiative Channel	0,0	0,1	0,7	0,0	15,0	1166,0
	Users who logged in during a period over 2 weeks	0,0	0,8	1,5	0,0	11,0	346,0
	All users	0,0	0,3	1,0	0,0	15,0	1512,0
Signatures	Users who tried Initiative Channel	0,0	0,0	0,3	0,0	9,0	1166,0
	Users who logged in during a period over 2 weeks	0,0	0,2	0,7	0,0	8,0	346,0
	All users	0,0	0,1	0,5	0,0	9,0	1512,0
Number of writings expressed by full name	Users who tried Initiative Channel	0,0	0,2	0,7	0,0	9,0	1166,0
	Users who logged in during a period over 2 weeks	0,0	0,6	1,5	0,0	13,0	346,0
	All users	0,0	0,3	1,0	0,0	13,0	1512,0
Number of writings expressed by nickname	Users who tried Initiative Channel	0,0	0,4	1,1	0,0	13,0	1166,0
	Users who logged in during a period over 2 weeks	0,0	1,4	2,9	0,0	26,0	346,0
	All users	0,0	0,6	1,8	0,0	26,0	1512,0
Number of anonymously expressed writings	Users who tried Initiative Channel	0,0	0,7	1,7	0,0	20,0	1166,0
	Users who logged in during a period over 2 weeks	1,0	2,6	4,0	0,0	28,0	346,0
	All users	0,0	1,1	2,6	0,0	28,0	1512,0
Days between first and last login	Users who tried Initiative Channel	1,4	3,5	4,2	0,0	15,0	340,0
	Users who logged in during a period over 2 weeks	64,6	106,1	120,5	15,0	621,3	346,0
	All users	15,1	55,3	99,8	0,0	621,3	686,0

Table 1. Key figures describing the use of Initiative Channel among all registered users by 24th July 2009 (N = 1512)

	Users who logged in during period less than two weeks	Users who logged in during period of at least two weeks	All
Users who have logged in less than 3 times	1079 90 %	119 10 %	1198 100 %
Users who have logged in at least 4 times	87 28 %	227 72 %	314 100 %
Total	1166 77 %	346 23 %	1512 100 %

Table 2. User activity and interest in using the service.

Coding Of Ideas

In the following two tables I express the quantitative results I gathered by coding all of the 822 ideas expressed in INCH. Coding was based on the following codes:

- *INCH restricted not to cover the idea*: Moderators wrote in the follow-up texts, that INCH is not meant for the certain kind of idea.
- *Blocked by other users*: Ideas that didn't get more positive than negative comments or votes, and therefore weren't sent further.
- *Justified by common good*: Ideas in whose descriptions the user has referred to common good.
- *Justified by individual need*: Ideas whose justification arises mainly from the authors own needs.
- *Inappropriate*: Ideas the moderators have referred to as 'inappropriate'.
- *Moderators have sent the ideas further*: Idea has been sent to some institution or people who could take care of it.
- *Success story*: Ideas marked as success stories by moderators.
- *Ideas expressing social control*: Ideas that are concerned about how others should live or behave.

Furthermore, the subjects in table 3 are those occurring in INCH's own classification of ideas.

		Idea type			
		Ideas of Expression	Ideas of Direct Influence	Ideas of Participation	Total (N)
Subject	Hobbies and free time	8	14	78	100 (289)
	Local neighbourhood	2	95	3	100 (64)
	School and studying	15	84	2	100 (166)
	Social and health services	18	50	32	100 (11)
	Environment and nature	42	9	49	100 (12)
	Other subjects	7	77	16	100 (280)
	All (N)	7 (59)	77 (628)	16 (135)	100 (822)

Table 3. Distribution of ideas expressed in Initiative Channel by 24th July 2009 classified in different categories using Rosanvallon's (2008, 34-35) typology of democratic engagement. and in the INCH's own categories.

It can be seen from table 3 that different subject categories direct users to express different type of ideas. "Local neighbourhood" was a category in which almost only ideas with direct influence were expressed, whilst "Hobbies and free time" directed young people to participate. Most ideas of expression were expressed in the category "Environment and nature", but this category was the second least popular of the 6 categories.

		Codes						
		Blocked by other users	Justified by common good	Justified by individual need	Moderators have sent the idea further	Success story	Idea expressing social control	All (N)
Codes	Blocked by other users	12	1	10	2	0	2	100 (517)
	Justified by common good	48	100	0	53	13	13	100 (152)
	Idea of expression	87	27	33	13	0	60	100 (59)
	Inappropriate	43	0	71	0	0	0	100 (27)
	Justified by individual need	69	0	100	29	3	1	100 (543)
	Idea of direct influence	66	19	72	33	4	9	100 (62)
	Success story	0	44	56	100	100	0	100 (17)
	Idea of participation	63	20	69	29	9	11	100 (135)
	Idea expressing social control	13	22	9	13	0	100	100 (87)
	All	63	18	66	26	2	11	100 (822)

Table 4. Occurrence of different combinations of codes in coded idea data (%).

Table 4 shows that 69 % of ideas justified by individual needs were blocked by other users and 29 % of them were sent further. Of ideas justified by common good, 48 % were blocked by others and 53 % were sent further. Therefore it seems that the INCH directs its using to a direction emphasizing common good over individual needs. However, of success stories 56 % were based on individual needs and 44 % on common good, although only 152 ideas were based on social control and 543 ideas were based on common good. Therefore it seems that ideas based on common good are much easier to make succeed. In fact 53 % of the ideas based on common good were sent further, while only 33 % of ideas based on individual needs were sent further.

Ideas of expression (60 % of them) often involved strong social control and were conformist in that sense. It seems that more radical ideas of expression are usually not posted in INCH. Most ideas of participation (69 %) and ideas of direct influence (72 %) were based on individual needs.

Appendix 8. Codes Used to Denote Different Respondents

Moderators interviewed or responding online form:

In order to guarantee the confidentiality of the interviews, the interviewees and online form responses were not separated in the analysis. The code is of the form M[F/M][age], where M denotes moderator, and second letter F female or M male. If several respondents have the same code, they are further equipped with lower case alphabets in order to distinct different respondents. The ages are varied a little in order to guarantee the confidentiality of different responses.

Moderators in from the developmental day:

The moderators comments expressed in the developmental day are coded by MDFX, where X denotes a unique identification number for each moderator quoted. The ages of these moderators cannot be expressed, since they were not collected. All participating moderators were female (F).

Young people interviewed or responding online form:

In order to guarantee the confidentiality of the answers, the interviewees and online form respondents are not specified. In the analysis a code denoting a user is of the form Y[N/O][F/M/X][age], where Y denotes young person, N a new user, O user using the service for at least one month, F female, M male, and X unknown. If several respondents have the same code, it is further equipped with lower case alphabets in order to distinct different respondents. The ages are varied a little in order to guarantee the confidentiality of different responses.

Young people	Moderators	Moderators in development day
YNM15	MF47	MDF1
YOX14	MF50	MDF2
YOF20	MM25	MDF3
YOM15	MF33a	MDF4
YOF18	MF33b	MDF5
YNM16	MF26a	MDF6
YNF17	MF27	
YOF16	MF26b	
YOF17	MM31	
YNF15	MF36a	
YOF17	MF28a	
YNM44	MF45	
YNF22	MF28b	
YOF14	MF31	
YNF19	MF36b	
YOF17	MF28c	
YNF20	MM45	
YOF15	MF26c	
YNM22		

Table 1. Codes used to denote different respondents.

Summary

Voting turnout has been decreasing across Western liberal democracies during last few decades. As a solution to the decline, the Finnish Government has supported creation of a web service (INCH: Aloitekanava.fi) in which young people can participate by expressing ideas about future changes in local environment. It both answers to the general request to hear young people but also to teach certain civic skills that are seen helpful in making young people more active voters. In this study I am considering the web service and especially the study question how political culture develops in it. Instead of defining the concept of political culture very precisely, it is used to denote something socially meaningful and valuable 'cultural' background presupposed by a certain political process. In the case of INCH I am trying to understand what political culture is about in a certain context rather than applying any abstract concept of political culture and reflecting what it tells about INCH. In the process of finding meaning and value of INCH socio-semiotic approach is going to be used, while an approach arising from articulation theory helps to link social phenomena into political struggles and struggles for power. Therefore I am particularly interested in different people's values and attitudes regarding the service in relation to their considerations of politics. In general I am interested in problems governmental political 'activation programs' inherit, and what can be said about them by considering this particular case.

My theorico-methodological approach is based on both social semiotics and articulation theory by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. The former is used as a tool to understand the research material directly, whilst the latter helps in acquiring a general view of how different actors finally fold together. Socio-semiotic approach is based on social constructionism and it is particularly interested in the creation of values and how actors are socially constituted and given meaning. The relations between people involved with the web service is analysed based on A. J. Greimas' actantial model and theory of modalities. I will analyse the Government, youth workers moderating the service, and young people who try to use it. By using socio-semiotic tools I show how different actors see the role of the portal and other actors, and how they value the activation program. This approach helps us classify users of the service to different classes depending on their relation to the service. In order to get a general view, by using Laclau's and Mouffe's discourse theory, I will consider the reasons why young people split into different positions I have theoretically derived by using socio-semiotic approach, and the kind of oppositions that develop between them. In particular, the concept of antagonism is used as a heuristic tool not only to address how young people relate to the web service, but in order to understand the deeper reasons based on differences that remain unarticulated in public political debate regarding the service.

Analysis will be divided into three parts concerning the Government's account manifested in the Youth Policy Program, youth workers moderating the service, and young people try to use it. The Youth Policy Program gives a rather strict position to young people, which fits quite well to the classical narration structure. The Government is projected as a sender for young people to strive to the object of participation for the sake of the nation as a whole. Global environment,

de-regulated Internet, and disinterest in participation are defined as opponents, whilst they are supported with help coming from proper education, media literacy and civic skills and the web service in particular. However, participation remains a rather empty concept, and it is associated with values compatible with the history of Finnish political culture based on conformist values such as 'truth' of the nation and the moral truth of good Finnish citizens, 'authenticity', strong obedience and respect for law. Therefore the Youth Policy Program sees young people as objects of education rather than people with real political subjectivity. The governmental account is rather uncritical and consists of a non-reflected stance to young people. It is based on the truth of people rather than on trying to understand them and critically evaluate different possibilities. Young people's own aspirations seem to be left in the shadow. Without almost any questioning, the Government assumes that the lack of interest in participation is due to the lack of abilities to act under the prevailing system.

The moderators (youth workers) are given the role of educators in the Youth Policy Program. I will consider their conceptions of young people's participation in order to understand how they reproduce the discourse. It turns out that due to lack of education or understanding of politics, moderators consider the purpose of the web service as a truth with a pre-given meaning. Therefore they concentrate in teaching skills needed to be able to use the service, but simultaneously end up reproducing the governmental discourses without reflecting their own stand as political educators nor giving the space enabling young people to resist its use. The moderators act as helpers for young people willing to use the service 'appropriately', when young people find themselves in struggle with municipal and other administrative institutions responsible to consider young people's ideas. However, they usually can take the helpers role only if the rather conformist picture of the Government is possible to fulfil.

Finally, while considering young people's own conceptions and opinions, it turns out that young people can be divided into those who remain indifferent to the governmental discourse and model, and those who start reproducing it. Indifferent young people see their position indifferent or at least distant to actors such as the Government. Depending on their own aspirations they can try to use the service in order to get some of their ideas through, but they don't take stance on nationally oriented discourses of young people's participation, and often they are not linked to other forms of youth politics. These people usually lose their interest to use the service after figuring out that ideas have usually only nominal possibilities to succeed.

The other group, being rather conformist, starts to reproduce the governmental picture. Therefore they project themselves as senders to other young people and start to educate others about the truth of the right ways to participate and how young people should go about it. Hence, they adopt a position similar to that of the Government rather than fulfilling the governmental picture. They are often interested in taking part in the political struggle between young people and adults by using rather conventional routes, and a majority of them are connected to other youth participation such as student bodies or youth councils.

By analysing how young people's will and interests develop in relation to the position the Government requests from them and in relation to local administrations responsiveness, the service becomes more understandable. Due to the lack of empowerment and young people's subordinate position with the adult-oriented administration, young people can see INCH as a meaningful system mainly, if they start mimicking the governmental discourse of the importance of young people's own participation by conventional, governmentally oriented manners. Therefore the civic skills education transforms to civic education but also leads to an opposition amidst young people themselves, which questions the possibilities of INCH to reclaim democratic empowerment. Especially, it turns out, that due to rather strict control mechanisms, asymmetries in cultural capital among young people contributes to problems of equality. Simultaneously, struggle over identities, deriving from the competition of Finnish hegemonic discourse with new 'sub-cultural' discourses deriving from global context, is a constitutive factor for the meaning of the service, which is compatible with Laclau's and Mouffe's articulation theory. Therefore, even when young people have started to use the service, it does not obviously mean that it is a form of democracy, though it may be a good sign of societal participation.

In conclusion, I consider how politics is organically associated to different narrations and discourses that circulate in the society. While in general, these discursive cycles are hard to grasp on, keeping the web service as a nodal point, it breaks down the cycle to a semi-circle, where the Government sends young people to participate and young people send municipalities to fulfil their needs. Therefore my restriction to the one particular case, which works as a laboratory, helps us in understanding the general issues of political discourses circulating among various actors. This consideration also helps in understanding how the 'crisis' of democracy could be seen as a real political struggle instead of dissolution of politics. Simultaneously, the case helps in understanding, how action that superficially looks like inappropriate, or even non-existent, is indeed a political manifestation questioning the status quo of any such thing as official purpose or hegemony. However, because democracy consists of various struggles between different people, the case also shows that there is a danger of causing further oppositions rather than resolving situations even if it had been the original purpose.

From the Government's perspective the question about the healthiness of democracy concerns people's ability to answer to the universality and conformity principles of Finnish society, where participation means rather joining and acting like others instead of changing the culture. Young people not voting or willing to use the service have different desires than the ones the Government tries to teach to them. Therefore, what some young people desire, the Government sees as inability, and therefore the capabilities and ability of young people fail to meet. The Government thinks that young people can only possess a partial subjectivity and that their capabilities should be trained rather than letting them to participate in the process of value creation, where different desires become articulated. Enhancement of young people's capabilities is seen to rather automatically lead to participation and to adoption of certain values.

The governmental account contradicts with studies showing that young people would like to express some larger political programs as well. According to these studies they want to be actual subjects, not just potential subjects of Finnish democracy as future citizens or subjects of the story written under the prevailing political culture. The Government is trying to impose conformist values over young people, based on its experience of coercive youth work, although the disinterest in politics could be interpreted as a sign of opposing the conventional values prevalent to current political culture. Therefore, I can conclude that currently the hegemonic discourse can only resonate with a conformist conception of youth, not the youth deep in the 'de-regulated' global culture manifested in the Net. However, the web service offers at least some kind of channel for social interaction between different actors and could therefore contribute to new ways of understanding democracy, and to new forms of democratic action. The possibilities of the portal are not comprehensively predetermined, although it is a manifestation of Finnish culture in a new environment characterised by the global Internet and the global market economy. Overall, considering the service can help to reflect problems of the Finnish democracy in a wider context as well.

Finally, I will discuss the problematic nature of such disciplines as youth participation and eDemocracy reflected from the point of view of my study. Because young people are subordinate to adults, their actions such as using the web service, can be overdetermined as symbols signifying young people as a class or as a larger group of people. By such overdeterminations they become associated with hegemonic discourses of Finnish nation building. Furthermore, young people representing the so called 'digital generation' become associated with Finnish 'knowledge society' project that is willing to develop various Internet based applications in the name of democracy labelled as eDemocracy or 'network democracy'. Although it is questionable whether eDemocracy substantially and equally empowers people, while it appears in the costume of democracy and can become accepted as a new form of governance.

However, politics is not something pre-existing and static. Education has a crucial place in renewal and transformation of political values. Therefore I will suggest an approach based on critical pedagogy to be taken by moderators in educational situations where eDemocracy, or societal participation in general, is discussed with young people.

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<p>Tiivistelmä-Referat-Abstract</p> <p>Tutkimuksessani käsittelen opetusministeriön tuella kehitettyä Aloitekanava.fi-nimistä verkkopalvelua, jonka tarkoituksena on ainakin osittain mahdollistaa vuonna 2006 voimaan tulleen nuorisolain mukainen nuorten kuuleminen kunnissa. Palvelu on tällä hetkellä käytössä jo lähes 100 kunnassa eri puolilla Suomea.</p> <p>Tutkimuksessa käsittelen verkkopalvelun ympärillä kehittyvää nuorten poliittista kulttuuria ja poliittisen vuorovaikutuksen tapoja narratiivisesta sosiosemioottisesta näkökulmasta sekä yhdistän tämän näkökulman Ernesto Laclau ja Chantal Mouffén artikulaatioteoriaan. Lapsi- ja nuorisopoliitiikan kehittämisohjelma (2007-2011) sekä palvelua moderoivien nuorisotyöntekijöiden näkökulmat asetetaan keskustelemaan suhteeseen palvelua käyttävien ja sitä kokeilevien nuorten kanssa. Keskeisenä kysymyksenä on se, miten nuorten poliittista kulttuuri muovautuu verkkopalvelussa ja sen ympärillä. Eri aineistojen dialektinen suhde auttaa ymmärtämään niitä diskursiivisia taustakamppailuja, joita palvelun ympärillä käydään, ja sitä, miten suomalaisen poliittisen kulttuurin historia sävyttää demokraattisen osallistumisen puhetapoja nykynuorten parissa.</p> <p>Medialukutaito ja nuorten asenteiden ohjaaminen kansallisvaltiotsuuntautuneisiin käsityksiin ovat keskeisillä sijoilla kehittämisohjelmissa. Aloitekanava.fi-palvelu jäsenyytavoitteelliseksi palveluksi valtiovallan näkökulmasta ja rinnastuu aiempiin kansalaiskasvattamisen pyrkimyksiin sekä nuorisopoliittisen keskustelun tyyppisiin piirteisiin aina 1900-luvun alusta lähtien. Internet on tuonut mukaan sekä uusia mahdollisuuksia kansallishenkiselle kasvatusihanteelle, joihin kehittämisohjelma pyrkii vastaamaan.</p> <p>Moderaattoreina toimivat nuorisotyöntekijät näyttävät uusintavan kehittämisohjelman sävyttämää osallistumisdiskurssia eivätkä ota kriittistä etäisyyttä ylhäältä päin annettuihin vaikuttamisdiskursseihin. Suurin osa nuorista, jotka ovat kohdanneet palvelun, eivät koe sen käyttöä kovin mielekkääksi aidon muutosmahdollisuuden kokemuksen puutteesta. Palvelun kannalta keskeiseksi nouseekin se, minkälainen kuva hyvästä vaikuttamisesta nuorille annetaan, käsitetäänkö vaikuttamista ennemmin sosiaalisena osallistumisena vai monesti hyvin materiaalistien käytännön muutosten aikaansaajana. Asiapohjainen demokratiakäsitys on ristiriidassa sosiaalisen median osallistumiselle tuomien mahdollisuuksien kanssa.</p> <p>Palvelu ei näytä tavoittavan merkittävästi muiden vaikuttamiskanavien kuten oppilaskuntien hallitusten ja nuorisovaltuustojen piiriin kuulumattomia nuoria. Näihin ryhmiin kuuluvat sen sijaan uusintavat nuorisopoliitiikan kehittämisohjelman teemoja, jotka perustuvat suomalaisen poliittisen kulttuurin keskeisille arvoille: universalismille ja konformismille. Palvelun käyttöä esimerkiksi poliittisen satiirin välineenä vieroksutaan ja käytön asiallisuutta korostetaan. Nuorten ongelmat saada äänensä kuuluviin aikuisten piirissä oikeuttavat palvelua aktiivisesti käyttävien nuorten mielestä palvelun rajaamisen kapea-alaiseen aikuisten hyväksymään tapaan vaikuttaa. Juuri vastakkainasettelu aikuisten kanssa näyttäisi viime kädessä johtavan nuorten keskinäisiin kamppailuihin ja kyvyttömyyteen poliittisten erojen artikulaatioon ja deliberaatioon nuorten omassa keskuudessa.</p> <p>Teoreettisesti tutkimukseni antaa uuden näkökulman siihen, kuinka sosiosemioottista lähestymistapaa voidaan käyttää yhdessä artikulaatioteorian kanssa ja soveltaa useiden aineistoryhmien välisten suhteiden tarkasteluun. Erityisesti semioottinen menetelmä auttaa ymmärtämään, minkälaisia merkityksistä artikulaatioteoriaan kuuluvaan subjektin halkeamiseen liittyy ja kuinka ne tuodaan kertomuksellisesti esille. Tutkimuksen lopussa ehdotan, että tällaista lähestymistapaa voitaisiin käyttää demokratian ongelmien tarkasteluun myös muissa yhteyksissä.</p>		
Avainsanat-Nyckelord-Key words nuorten osallistuminen, sosiosemiotiikka, poliittinen kulttuuri, verkkodemokratia, demokratia, vaikuttaminen, osallistuminen, nuorisopoliitiikka		
Säilytyspaikka-Förvaringsställe-Where deposited		
Muita tietoja-Övriga uppgifter-Additional information		