



Why do governments engage in e-democracy?



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Index



- **Background**
- **Availability of e-democracy projects**
- **Responsiveness to e-democracy projects**
- **Conclusions**
- **Outlook**

Background



- Last decade: a boom of e-democracy initiatives
- Not only in the West
- Some non-democracies are outperforming long-standing democracies
- UN e-participation index 2012:
 - 1 **NL/Korea**
 - 2 **Kazakhstan/Singapore**
 - 3 **UK/US**

Why do governments engage in e-democracy?



Puzzling to see non-democracies engage in e-democracy

Reasons for:

1. Availability of e-democracy projects
2. Responsiveness to e-democracy projects

Availability of e-democracy



- Socio-economic modernization is a key predictor
- Wealth leads to demand for freedom and demo
- Human capital, a determinant
- (Norris 2001, Siau & Long 2009)

development

Availability of e-democracy



- Political context should not be downplayed
- Democratic systems are prone to promote e-demo
- Authoritarian regimes seek to suppress political freedoms
- (Norris 2001, Inglehart & Welzel 2005)

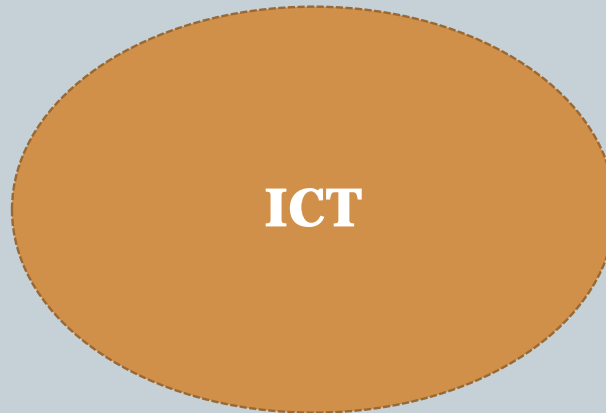
democracy

A green oval with a dashed border, containing the word "democracy" in white, bold, lowercase letters.

Availability of e-democracy



- ...but there is variation of e-democracy also in highly developed democracies
- Political and social org. adapt technology quite independently of development
- Tech development shape society
- (Norris 2001)



Availability of e-democracy



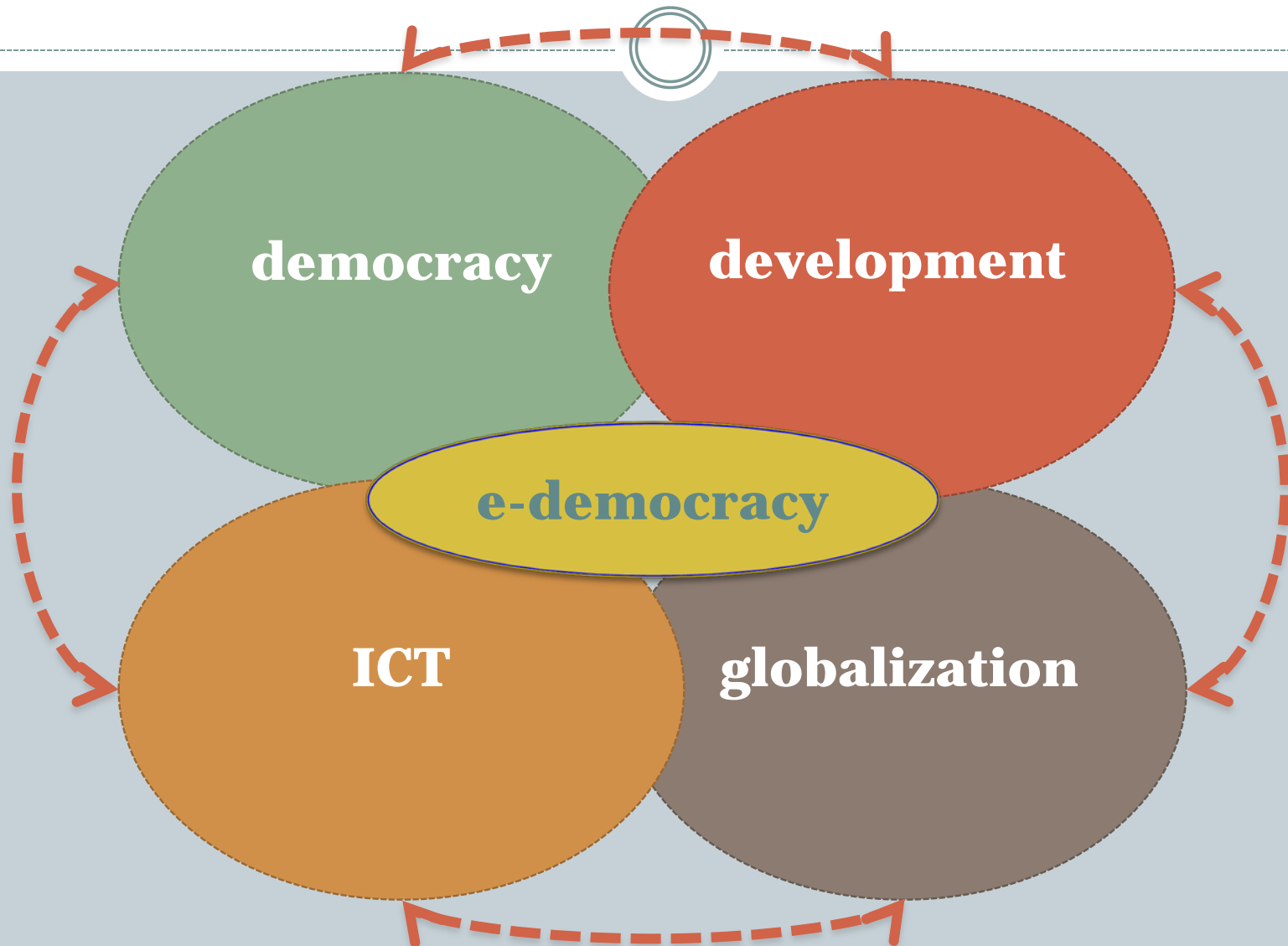
- “Legitimation hypothesis” (Jaeger 2005, Chadwick, 2001)
- Ec globalization and tech development drive e-democracy in authoritarian regimes, regardless of the level of democratization
- Economic globalization opens up countries
- ICT is a tool for economic growth: gain legitimacy, secure investments from abroad



globalization

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Availability of e-democracy



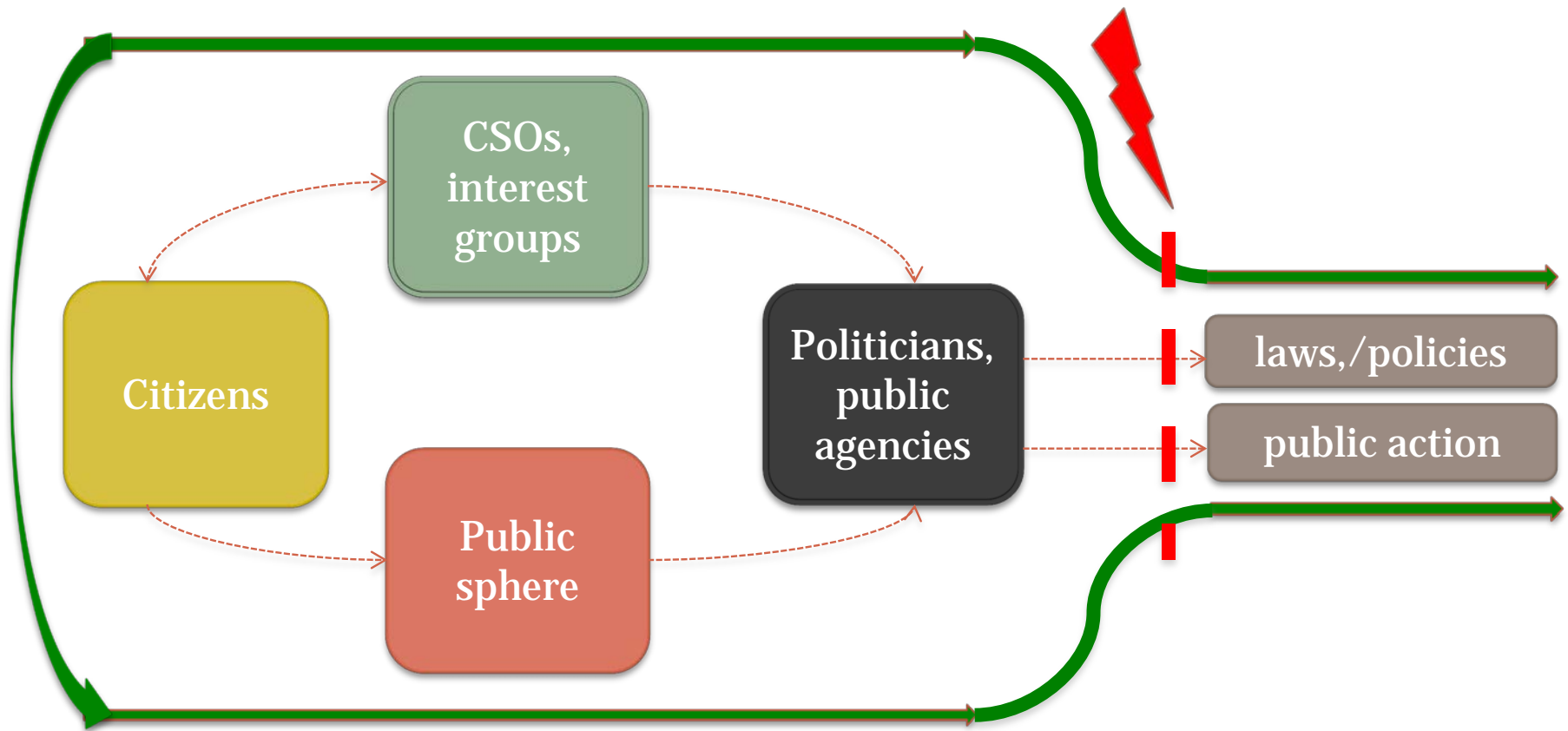
Source: Astrom et al. 2012

Availability is not results



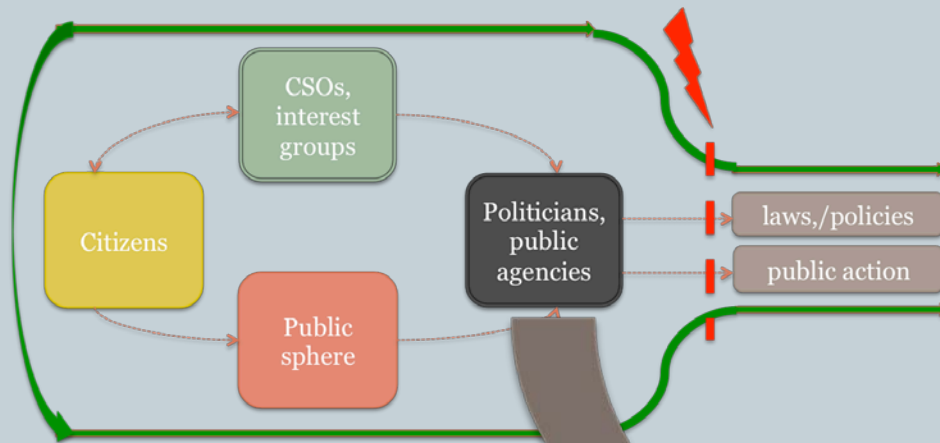
- The e-democracy field has started to go beyond simple counting of projects (e.g. UN index), looking also at results
- The literature/my PhD shows little responsiveness to public engagement in e-democracy projects

Bottleneck in the political model



Source: Model of democratic politics from Fung et al. 2013

Unpacking the government box



Unresponsiveness to e-democracy



STABILITY/POWER:

- Political practices are change-resistant
- Politicians secure stability and development of public inst.
- Maintain/boost personal power
- Winston's '[Law of suppression of radical potential](#)':
- elites assure that new technologies are integrated into society without disrupting fundamental power relations

Unresponsiveness to e-democracy



REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY IDEALS

- Politicians consider that e-democracy threatens their democratic mandate:
 - it is their duty to make decisions on behalf of citizens
 - more qualified than ordinary people
 - special interest groups “hijacking” the process
- Fear consequences that e-democracy might have for the role of the parties and for the electoral turnout

Source: Mahrer and Krimmer (2005); Åström and Sedelius (2010).

Responsiveness to e-democracy



MEDIA INCENTIVES

- Individual politicians are more visible:
 - jumping the intermediation
 - facilitated access to traditional media
- Use of e-demo platforms for election campaigning

Responsiveness to e-democracy



BOTTOM-UP INCENTIVES

- Increasing pressure for participation by citizens and civil society, outside elections
- Decreased voter turnout and levels of trust

Source: Codagnone and Wimmer (2007)

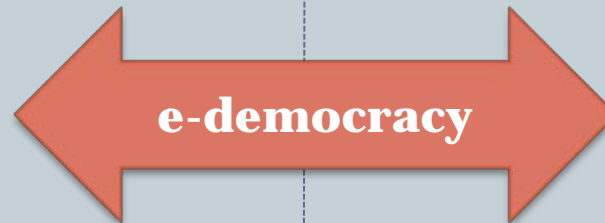
Conclusions

INSIDE CAMP

- Stability of power, protection
- Representative democracy
- Have a final say, unresponsiveness

OUTSIDE CAMP

- Challenge institutions
- Participatory democracy



Conclusions



- The availability of e-democracy projects does not mean that they have an impact
- Today, e-democracy is used by politicians as a one-way communication tool
- Governments' disincentives for responsive e-democracy are stronger than incentives, creating bottlenecks in terms of results

Outlook: future



- The structure of political power will not be radically changed (Bimber 1998)
- No online direct democracy
- E-democracy will lead to an incremental change in some areas (Fung et al. 2013)
 - Political monitoring
 - Advocacy
 - Mobilization



Thank you for your attention!