

**A model for emergent citizen-focussed  
local electronic democracy**

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# Abstract

Situated within the emerging fields of eDemocracy and Community Informatics (CI), this mixed methods research explores the factors affecting the uptake of electronic democratic (eDemocracy) processes in a regional community setting from a citizen-driven (bottom-up) perspective. Critical social theory and a social-critical approach were used to guide sequential phases of data collection. Phase I was a primarily quantitative survey of ICT users active in the community and voluntary sector in New Zealand and Phase II consisted of qualitative interviews with a range of actors involved in community informatics in Waitakere City, analysed by using grounded theory methodology.

The research findings describe the processes that occur between and within community and local government that can lead to the adoption of eDemocracy practices that privilege citizens. eDemocracy is revealed as being more than internet-enabling the processes of local democracy, rather it incorporates strategies to ensure the equitable and effective use of ICT as well. To make this happen, a socially-oriented process of transformation must occur, where grounded leadership in both community and local government drives and supports change through technical actions that lead to transformed democratic processes.

The value of ICT is shown to lie in the potential to lower the barriers to democratic engagement and to provide tools that communities can develop and manage for themselves. Citizen-led local eDemocracy does not remove or challenge the role of representative government, rather it extends the options for how democracy can occur in a local setting and allows for the emergence of new deliberative, issues-based and individually-focussed platforms for engagement.

# Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that this thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution. I further certify that to the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

The thesis does not exceed 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies, appendices and footnotes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AW', is positioned above a horizontal line.

---

Andy Williamson

November 2007

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This research is about transformation, yet the process of research is itself transformative. As I write the final words of this thesis I am not the person I was when I started it. Thank you to everyone who has supported me and in turn I hope that this work can touch others and benefit many.

*E iti noa ana, na te aroha<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Though my gift is small, my love goes with it.



# Glossary of Terms

<b>Aotearoa</b>	New Zealand. Literally, 'land of the long white cloud' (Māori).
<b>C2C</b>	Electronic communication from citizens to citizens.
<b>C2G</b>	Electronic communication from citizens to government.
<b>CI</b>	Community Informatics. A praxis-based discipline concerned with the theory and practice of the application of ICT to support community development (defined fully in Chapter 2).
<b>CST</b>	Critical Social Theory (defined fully in Chapter 3).
<b>Digital Strategy</b>	The New Zealand Government's Digital Strategy is the key policy and practice document relating to ICT in government, civil society and business in New Zealand (see <a href="http://www.digitalstrategy.govt.nz">www.digitalstrategy.govt.nz</a> ).
<b>EcoTech</b>	A term used within Waitakere to represent the role of ICT within the constructs of a sustainable eco-city.
<b>eDemocracy</b>	Electronic democracy (defined fully in Chapter 2). Also referred to as 'e-Democracy' the term is used herein without a hyphen to be consistent with the use of the more established term, 'eCommerce'.
<b>eGovernment</b>	Electronic delivery of government information, services and transactions (defined fully in Chapter 2).
<b>FPP</b>	First past the post electoral system: One person, one vote electoral method where the candidate with the highest number of votes is elected. Used in most local body elections in New Zealand.
<b>G2C</b>	Electronic communication or transactions from government to citizens.
<b>GTM</b>	Grounded Theory Methodology.
<b>Hui</b>	A community meeting or forum (Māori).
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology. The term encompasses the electronic equipment used for information processing and communication, the software and processes to make it function and the data or other information transmitted across networks of ICT equipment, including voice and data telecommunications, the internet and mobile networks.

<b>Learning Centre</b>	Library-based community ICT centre providing free computing and internet access and training.
<b>LGA</b>	Local Government Act 2002.
<b>LTCCP</b>	Long term council-community plan: A legal requirement of the LGA, developed by city and district councils in consultation with citizens.
<b>Mana</b>	Usually refers to the respect, authority or prestige conveyed on a person by others (Māori).
<b>Māori</b>	The indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand.
<b>MMP</b>	Mixed Member Proportional: Proportional voting system used in General Elections in New Zealand where votes are cast for both a constituency-based candidate and for a party.
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding. A non-legally binding agreement between two or more parties to collaborate or otherwise work together towards a common goal.
<b>MP/MPs</b>	Member of Parliament/Members of Parliament (New Zealand House of Representatives).
<b>MUSH</b>	Literally ‘Metropolitan, Universities, Schools and Hospitals’. A term used to define key public anchor tenants for high-speed urban broadband networks.
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation.
<b>Pākehā</b>	Europeans and other non-Māori (Māori).
<b>Pasifika</b>	Pacific Island peoples.
<b>SIF</b>	Single Issue Fanatic.
<b>STV</b>	Single transferable vote: Voting system used in some local body elections and for the election of District Health Boards where voters state their numerical preference from a list of candidates and votes are transferred from low-scoring candidates as they are excluded.
<b>Telco</b>	Industry term for a telecommunications company, as defined by the Telecommunications Act 2001.
<b>TLA</b>	Territorial Local Authority – City, district or regional council.
<b>Technology</b>	The systems and processes that have been designed to solve human problems, of which ICT is a sub-set (see above).
<b>WADCOSS</b>	West Auckland District of Council of Social Services, since renamed Community Waitakere.
<b>WaitakereOnline</b>	The Waitakere City council, community and business web portal project (see

[www.waitakereonline.com](http://www.waitakereonline.com)).

**WeDG**

Waitakere eDemocracy Group: A group of local activists promoting the use of ICT within the local democratic process and a precursor to WETA and WorkRaft.

**WETA**

Waitakere EcoTech Action projects and working-group consisting of council and community representatives.

**Whānāu**

Extended family (Māori).

**Work Raft**

Work Raft Trust Incorporated: A community ICT trust based in Waitakere City (see [www.workraft.org.nz](http://www.workraft.org.nz)).

**WSIS**

World Summit on the Information Society (see [www.wsis.org](http://www.wsis.org)).



# Chapter 1 – Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

*Tungia te ururua kia tupu whakaritorito te tupu o te harakeke<sup>2</sup>*

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) offers citizens the potential to reclaim their voices at a time when increasing decentralisation of decision-making is mirrored by declining democratic participation (Norris, 2002; Wright, 2006) and a public perception that governments are “mentally moribund, seriously incompetent and, on frequent occasion, offensively arrogant” (Galbraith, 1992, p.67). A technocratic shift has resulted in decision-making moving away from elected representatives towards ‘experts’, with decisions based on science and professional knowledge, rather than public opinion (Mälkiä, Anttiroiko, & Savolainen, 2004). The result can be a culture of bureaucratic dysfunction, where policy development has “become highly academic and has lost touch with practical service delivery” with “no real respect for community sector knowledge” (New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, 2006, p.9). Such a synopsis posits a proposition that communities are over-consulted and then ignored. In the New Zealand local government context, Thompson-Fawcett and Freeman (2006) see falling rates of voter participation as challenging the legitimacy of the democratic process and an increasing perception that local government is detached from the community.

Feenberg (2001, p.vii) suggests that “technology is the medium of daily life in modern societies” and that democracy is bound up with the use and understanding of technology. ICT, and particularly the internet and wireless communication, has become a significant

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<sup>2</sup> Set fire to the overgrown bush and the new flax shoots will spring up (Māori proverb).

transformative technology. The internet is a demonstrably powerful tool for connecting people with information and with each other. As Schuler (2000) observes, it provides tools for strong democracy and, like other media, can be valuable if harnessed for communicating a message. ICT provides an interactive experience where the views of many can be expressed and potentially disseminated widely, setting it apart from traditional print and electronic media and offering citizens the opportunity to become more involved in the political and democratic process.

Situated within the emerging fields of eDemocracy<sup>3</sup> and Community Informatics (CI)<sup>4</sup>, this mixed methods research explored the factors affecting the uptake of electronic democratic (eDemocracy) processes in a regional community setting in New Zealand from a citizen-driven (bottom-up) perspective. This chapter identifies the aims and objectives of the research and outlines the research questions. It describes the significance of the research and then contextualises this researcher's position in the study and the study location through a brief discussion of CI initiatives in New Zealand. There is a discussion of the key literature informing the study, of the research framework and of the study's data collection and analysis methods. This is followed by an overview of the thesis structure.

## 1.2 Research Aims

This research examined the impact of using ICT to influence democratic processes in a regional community in New Zealand<sup>5</sup> and the factors that influenced the uptake of ICT for this purpose by:

1. Observing and documenting the processes used within a community for engagement, consultation and development between council and community and the extent to which this is facilitated and influenced by the use of ICT;

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<sup>3</sup> The term 'eDemocracy' is used to denote electronically enabled democracy and is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

<sup>4</sup> Community informatics is a research and practice discipline that supports the social appropriation of ICT and is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

<sup>5</sup> Waitakere City is one of seven cities and districts that make up the Auckland Region.

2. Identifying the normative conditions for engagement and electronic engagement that are required to establish a framework that could lead to a shift in the locus of power within the context of local (and potentially national) government; and
3. Defining a typology to describe the role of ICT in the context of local democracy, government and governance.

## 1.3 Research Questions

In order to achieve the above aims, the following questions were developed:

- RQ1            What impact does ICT have on facilitating democratic processes?**
- SQ1.1      What is understood to be meant by the terms eDemocracy, eGovernment and eGovernance?
- SQ1.2      What processes exist for community engagement, consultation and development?
- SQ1.3      What motivates citizens to become involved in the democratic process?
- SQ1.4      What motivates participation in an eDemocracy process?
- SQ1.5      What factors influence and facilitate the adoption of ICT amongst those with an in interest in local democracy?
- SQ1.6      What is the basic social process influencing the adoption of eDemocracy practices?
- SQ1.7      What is the basic social process of enhanced civic participation through eDemocracy?
- RQ2            What is an appropriate model for describing the processes required to establish and sustain the effective use of ICT in local democratic processes?**

The following process was undertaken in order to address these questions:

1. A literature review was undertaken to identify:
  - a. The usage and meaning of key terms with regard to ICT, democracy and government and to provide a working typology and vocabulary for the study (SQ1.1).
  - b. Research associated with the use of ICT in the democratic, political and government process, community-based technology projects and participation in democratic processes in order to contextualise the research (SQ1.1, 1.6).
2. A survey instrument was developed to examine:
  - a. The terminology used by the participants in relation to ICT and democracy/government (SQ1.1, 1.5).
  - b. How ICT were used by citizens and community groups in relation to democratic, political or government practices and processes (SQ1.5.1).
  - c. The processes of democracy and democratic engagement occurring amongst the participants (SQ1.2).
  - d. The social and cultural perceptions of and motivations to ICT in general and in the context of engagement in democratic and government practices and processes (SQ1.6).
  - e. The barriers to ICT adoption in general and in the context of engagement in democratic and government practices and processes (SQ1.6).
3. Interviews were then carried out to identify and describe:
  - a. How participation in the democratic process occurs in Waitakere City (SQ1.2, 1.6, RQ2).
  - b. The factors that influence the uptake of ICT amongst the participants (SQ1.5, 1.6, RQ2).
  - c. The motivations for engagement employed by participants in regard to their interactions with democratic processes (SQ1.6, RQ2).
  - d. The barriers and enablers to the effective use of ICT within the democratic processes (SQ1.7, RQ2).



4. Literature was compared with the locally observed practices and processes in order to identify and situate emergent themes with regard to ICT and democracy/government within a body of knowledge, highlighting similarities and differences (SQ1.1, 1.6, RQ2).
5. The results of the research were then used to describe:
  - a. The role of ICT in facilitating and influencing participation in the democratic process and how a local eDemocracy process can emerge (SQ1.7, RQ2).
  - b. A generic model and recommendations to support the adoption of ICT such that they can influence and affect citizen-participation in local democratic process (RQ2).

## 1.4 Significance of the Research

This study is significant because it took a broad range of participants, firstly from across New Zealand and then from within Waitakere City, and examined the processes that they used and the interactions that occurred in relation to ICT in the context of participant-led democracy. The research contributes to the:

- debate regarding the construction of an online civil society and to the existing theory and practice in CI by describing actual benefits, issues, enablers and barriers relating to the use of ICT in a civil society setting;
- emerging academic fields of eDemocracy and CI;
- development of national and local policy and practice in these fields by providing a descriptive analysis of a local community's attempts to introduce ICT into the interactions that occur between government and citizens;
- development of a scalable model that will describe the attributes and stages of a citizen-led eDemocracy process. Such a model will in turn support the development and sustainability of community-based eDemocracy initiatives at both policy and practice levels; and
- development of an emerging typology relating to electronic democracy, government and governance.

The results of this research will be disseminated in the fields of CI, Community Development, eDemocracy and Public Policy. It has benefits on two levels. Firstly, the

research will contribute to the emerging scholarly debate relating to eDemocracy and the use of ICTs for civic engagement. Secondly, the research will enhance discussion amongst policy-makers and practitioners relating to the use of ICTs in community settings. The results offer:

- A critical analysis and discussion of the uptake of ICT in a local community setting, particularly as it relates to participation in local democracy.
- A transferable and scalable model for the implementation and adoption of eDemocracy processes and practices.
- A typology grounded in both literature and localised practice.

## **1.5 Context for the Study**

Interpretive and critical research is located within a social, political and geographical space. The research project emerged out of my personal experience as the researcher and from the experiences of the communities in which the research was situated; namely users of ICT who were active in local democracy and in the community and voluntary sector in Waitakere City and New Zealand. The next section provides a brief insight into the motivation for and background to the research and will then describe the democratic and electoral processes at work in the study location, namely Waitakere City and, more broadly, New Zealand, including a discussion of the unique attributes of New Zealand society. The second significant aspect of this research is its focus on the use of ICT within a community setting and so a discussion on community ICT initiatives is provided.

### **1.5.1 Personal Context**

This research project has emerged out of a growing personal interest in the role of ICT in community settings and involvement in local democracy and community projects in Waitakere City, in New Zealand and beyond. I am informed by over twenty years spent as a practitioner, manager and consultant in the Information Technology industry and by my experience as a researcher. My personal experience of using ICT within an activist community to promote a cause or concern and to publicise information was followed by a project to link together like-minded people across Waitakere City. From this embryonic process emerged a now well-established but sometimes fractious framework for community

and Council cooperation, which has seen ICT identified as a key strategic resource to the City, the development of a city-wide web portal and a Digital City Strategy as joint projects between stakeholders in community, business and local government. However, with a background in strategic planning, I was always aware that a *laissez-faire* project-by-project approach was no more appropriate or, in the long term, sustainable in a community setting than in a commercial setting. It lacked structure, leverage and, above all, learning.

My experience in this context has shown that the city-wide projects have had as strong a focus on capability building as on technology. Such local activity has developed alongside a national and international rise in the awareness of ICT as a community tool and as a tool for countering prevailing hegemonic discourses perpetuated by governments and mass media. I have witnessed the potential of ICT and been excited about what it is capable of supporting. I have been connected with projects that have transformed individuals and communities, that have generated significant social and economic capital and which are replicable and sustainable. I have also seen projects of this nature fail and an assessment of these experiences has influenced my approach to the conduct, analysis and application of this research.

I have become aware of the difficulties in sustaining volunteer-led community activities (particularly in a relatively small or remote community) and what appears to be a decreasing interest and awareness in what is happening in local communities beyond that which impacts directly. This has led me first to question and then to explore whether ICT can be harnessed to create more individual and community awareness and as a result increase local involvement. There is ample evidence that ICT can be used to connect people to projects and to like-minded others, whether they are locally situated or not. If ICT offers us the potential to increase (or create new forms of) social capital (and the research and anecdotal literature indicates that this is possible) then what role can ICT play in a citizen-led re-engagement with democratic processes? This question has led me to consider whether citizens and communities can be brought back to – or at least moved towards – the centre of governance and what part ICT can play in this realignment. If ICT is able to break down the ‘tyranny of

distance' across both space and time, can it also help overcome the barriers of technocracy, bureaucracy, media-bias and party-political agendas?

I am cautioned by McIntosh (2001) who warns that, whilst advocacy can be the catalyst or precursor to grassroots empowerment and the trigger for necessary political debate, "in community work the assumption of having an explicit mandate is always dangerous, normally misguided and usually ends in tears" (p.139). However, one outcome of this research has been its value in informing and providing input to the advancement of both a local and a national agenda relating to CI. The research has supported my continued advocacy for effective, scalable and sustainable solutions that are grounded in their community and the important role that ICT plays in enabling these.

## 1.5.2 New Zealand

Moving beyond the personal, this section describes the local context for the research. In particular, it will focus on two factors that differentiate New Zealand from otherwise similar 'developed' countries, firstly, bi-culturalism and the role of the Treaty of Waitangi and, secondly, the electoral system.

Integral to the construction of modern-day New Zealand and to a bicultural nation was the signing in 1840 and subsequent legal recognition of Te Tiriti o Waitangi<sup>6</sup>, giving New Zealand a unique position with respect to similar countries in that it privileges indigenous rights alongside the rights of European and other settlers. Te Tiriti defines and formalises a relationship between Māori, as the Indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand, and Pākehā (Europeans) (Du Plessis & Alice, 1998). A document of international legal standing, Te Tiriti forms the basis for biculturalism, which Sullivan (1994) defines as:

1. Equal partnership between two groups (Māori and Pākehā).
2. Māori are acknowledged as tangata whenua<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> The Treaty of Waitangi.

<sup>7</sup> The people of the land and first inhabitants of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

3. The Māori translation of Te Tiriti O Waitangi is acknowledged as the founding document of Aotearoa/New Zealand.
4. Concerned with addressing past injustices and re-empowering indigenous people.

Despite the above, it is noted that the application of te Tiriti remains contentious and politically charged. Increased anti-treaty rhetoric from the political right has been matched by a trend amongst the current centre-left Labour-led government to remove formal references to Treaty principles from government policy documents. The Digital Strategy (New Zealand Government, 2005) is one example of this: It does not explicitly acknowledge te Tiriti, thereby reducing “tangata whenua to ‘community’ alongside pony clubs and other interest groups” and, in so doing, it fails “to recognise the historic and spiritual body of knowledge and the inter-generational and unique nature of tangata whenua” (Kamira, 2007, p.15).

### 1.5.2.1 Electoral System

The New Zealand electoral and parliamentary systems follow a ‘Westminster’ model diverging from this in two significant aspects. First, in line with the bi-cultural nature of New Zealand, the electoral roll is split into a Māori roll and a General roll. Second, a number of voting systems are used, including two proportional systems and one traditional first-past-the-post system:

Table 1: Voting systems in use in New Zealand.

Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)	Used nationally for elections to New Zealand’s House of Representatives. The system also used in Germany.
First Past the Post (FPP)	Used in most local and regional government elections. The system is also used in the UK.
Single Transferable Vote	Used in all District Health Board elections and in some local and regional government elections. The system also used in Australia.

The MMP system of voting was adopted by binding referendum in 1993 and implemented in 1996 and gives electors two votes – one for their local MP and one for a (political) party list. As King (2003) notes, the change of electoral systems was in part a reaction to increasing public distrust of governments and in response to “successive governments of various

colours enacting controversial policies for which they had neither sought nor obtained a mandate” (p.493). The percentage of the public who trusted politicians fell from 32% in 1972 to 4% by 1992 (M. King, 2003). Whilst New Zealand has traditionally had (and continues to have) a relatively high voter turnout at general elections, in common with other ‘developed’ nations, voter turnout at elections has been declining (IDEA, 2002).

Under the MMP system, the New Zealand Parliament consists of approximately 120 Members (MP). ‘Electorate’ MPs represent either a General or a Māori electorate and ‘list’ MPs represent a political party (M. King, 2003). The number of seats and boundaries of the General and Māori electorates are reviewed after each five-yearly population census and the Māori Electoral Option (when voters of Māori descent are given an option to decide which electoral roll they are on). A change in the number of electorate MPs will change the number of ‘list’ MPs and a party winning more electorate seats than its share of the party vote can hold an ‘overhang’ seat for that parliamentary term. For the 2005 General Election, there were 69 ‘electorate’ MPs and 51 ‘list’ MPs (Elections New Zealand, 2004).

### **1.5.2.2 Local Government Elections**

Elections for local territorial authorities (city or district council) and regional councils, district health board and licensing trusts occur every three years. These votes can occur through either booth voting or (most commonly) postal voting. Local government elections use one or both of the following systems:

- First past the post (FPP)
- Single Transferable Vote (STV).

### **1.5.3 Waitakere City**

Waitakere City was chosen as the location for this research because I, as the researcher, was located there and active in local community ICT projects. However, it also presents a representative demographic picture of New Zealand. In providing a contextual overview, the city can be described in the following manner (Waitakere City Council, 2004a; Wikipedia, 2004). The city has a mix of urban and rural geography. It contains a high Māori and Pacific Island population, a relatively large migrant population and encompasses a wide range of

socio-economic levels. The City's population is relatively young compared to the rest of New Zealand and has relatively good access to ICT infrastructure. Waitakere City emerged from a study of New Zealand's eight largest cities as having the greatest level of community involvement. It is a city of differences, with significant variation in socio-economic status between the urban suburbs of Swanson, Ranui and Henderson to the north and New Lynn and Kelston to the west and the affluent rural suburbs of Titirangi, Laingholm and Piha (Gravitas, 2003; Waitakere City Council, 2004a).

Waitakere City is the westernmost city in the Auckland Region. It is the fifth largest territorial authority by population in New Zealand, with a population in 2003 of 185,600. The majority of the city's 367Km<sup>2</sup> area is rural land. Only 23% of land area is urban, the western part of the city being dominated by the Waitakere Ranges, much of which is gazetted as Regional Park with small communities within the park's boundaries. Waitakere City is bordered on the west by the Tasman Sea, to the east by Auckland City and the Waitemata Harbour and to the south by the Manukau Harbour (Waitakere City Council, 2004a; Wikipedia, 2004).

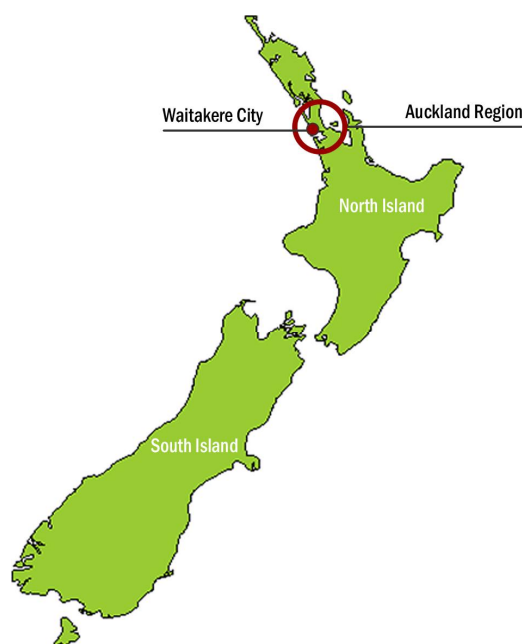


Figure 1: Location of Waitakere City.

### 1.5.3.1 Demographic Profile

Waitakere City has a young population, In 2001, 39% of the population was under 24 years of age (up from 31.9% in 1996). Waitakere's population is also ageing, people over the age of 65

constitute 8.8% (14,826) in 2001, an increase from 7.5% (10,329) in 1991. Māori make up 13.4% of the population (nationally this is 14.7%), with a median age of 21.1 years and 38.7% of Māori are aged under 15 (Statistics New Zealand, 2002a, 2002b).

In terms of ethnicity, 71.9% of people (114,867) said they belong to the European ethnic group (80.1% for all New Zealand). The population of Waitakere City contains a larger proportion of Pacific peoples (14.5%) and larger proportion of Asian people (11.0%) compared with the whole of New Zealand (at 6.5% and 6.6% respectively). In line with national trends, 67.5% of Waitakere's Residents were born in New Zealand as compared to 75.1% in 1991, only 19.2% of Māori people in the city (4,050) speak two languages; 2.0% (420) speak three or more languages. At the last Census, 183 people in the City spoke only Māori (a decrease from 375 in 1996) (Statistics New Zealand, 2002a, 2002b).

Waitakere City's residents earn slightly above the national average (\$20,800 compared with \$18,500 for all of New Zealand). 48.7% of those aged 15 years and over have an annual income of \$20,000 or less and 10.7% earn more than \$50,000. For Māori, the median income in Waitakere City is \$19,300, compared with \$14,800 for all Māori in New Zealand. Waitakere City's unemployment rate of 8.3% (6,945) compares poorly with 7.5% for all of New Zealand, however the Māori unemployment rate is below the national average (15.2%, compared with 16.8% nationally). Eighteen percent of Waitakere's workforce works less than 30 hours per week. Thirty five-percent work from 40-44 hours per week and 8% of the workforce work 60 hours or more per week. The most popular occupational group in Waitakere City is 'clerk' and the industries with the largest amounts of workers are:

- Manufacturing (12,204)
- Retail Trade (9,762)

Almost three quarters of the working population uses a private vehicle to travel to work (74%) and only 5% use public transport (51% of the households in two or more cars) (Gravitas, 2003; Statistics New Zealand, 2002a, 2002c).





Figure 2: Map of Waitakere City (Waitakere City Council, 2004b)

### 1.5.3.2 Local Government

The Local Government Act 2002 and the Local Electoral Act 2001 requires local body elections on a triennial basis for:

- Mayor
- Council
- Community Board<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The Community Board consists of elected members and appointed councillors from that ward. These boards oversee minor operational matters, such as footpaths.

Elections take place at the same time for the Auckland Regional Council (Waitakere City has two seats on this), the local licensing trust boards (Portage and Waitakere) and for the Waitemata District Health Board (DHB). With the exception of the DHB election, which uses STV, the FPP voting system is used throughout the city. Votes are cast for Mayor and for multiple candidates<sup>9</sup> for the council and community board positions described above.

Citizen participation in local government is re-enforced through the Local Government Act 2002, which defines the responsibilities of a local council, which include recognition of cultural values and identity, the provision of facilities and services as well as effective consultation so that citizens can participate in local government:

- (a) a local authority should ensure the role of democratic governance of the community.
- (b) a local authority should ensure that governance structures and processes are effective, open and transparent (Local Government Act 2002, Part 4, p.39).

These requirements emphasize principles of civic participation as a 'good thing'. Thompson-Fawcett and Freeman (2006) observe that, in New Zealand, the benefits of consultation and participation are well established in both statute and case law, citing specifically the Local Government Act 2002 and the Resource Management Act 1991. To be effective, consultation requires appropriate processes to be developed and sufficient time to be expended in the process. The desired outcome usually has the aim of achieving some kind of informed consensus. The significance of this point is made abundantly clear through a High Court ruling:

Consultation must be allowed sufficient time, and genuine effort must be made. It is to be a reality, not a charade. To 'consult' is not merely to tell or present. Nor, at the other extreme, is it to agree (Wellington International Airport v Air New Zealand, 1993, p.675)

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<sup>9</sup> Ward representation is based on population and, to a lesser degree, area and community of interest, with each ward having between two and five councillors, subject to periodic review.

The Quality of Life Report (Gravitas, 2003) assessed the effectiveness of New Zealand's main urban authorities of involving citizens. It showed that, whilst 34% of citizens in Waitakere City had a clear understanding of how Council decisions were made, 32% claimed to have no understanding of the local decision-making process. Of the eight New Zealand cities surveyed, Waitakere and Christchurch residents were the most satisfied (37%) with the way citizens were involved in decision-making. However, 31% of residents in Waitakere were dissatisfied in the way decisions were made.

## 1.5.4 Community Informatics in New Zealand

The value of ICT for community development was first recognised at a New Zealand policy level through the Connecting Communities Strategy (Community Employment Group, 2002). Reflected recognition of ICT's value is centred on communication, outreach to stakeholders, administrative efficiency and representation of culture (Blythe, 2002). The Connecting Communities Strategy aimed to improve access to and the effective use of ICT amongst communities and it defined a 'connected community' as one which used ICT as an enabler to reach its goals and needs effectively and efficiently. More recently, the Draft Digital Strategy (New Zealand Government, 2004) was published and this was followed a year later by the full strategy (New Zealand Government, 2005). The Digital Strategy provided "an integrated framework for existing and future initiatives to encourage the uptake and effective use of ICT for economic, social and cultural gain" (p.2) and set out to create the conditions necessary for this through three inter-related enablers:

1. Content: Information made available via digital networks.
2. Confidence and capability: The necessary skills to use ICT effectively.
3. Connection: Affordable access to ICT infrastructure (p.3).

The Digital Strategy is significant in that it signalled a realisation that a 'whole-of-government' approach to ICT was required and that, even in a 'developed' country such as New Zealand, ubiquity and sustainability of ICT, or innovation through ICT, could not be assumed. The model used in the strategy is internationally significant because it emerged through the 1<sup>st</sup> World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, 2004) and adopted the WSIS

tri-sectoral model of government, business and civil society. The Digital Strategy sets out a platform for ICT up to 2010 that must then be aligned with the government's key policy platforms to be operationalized. These are:

1. economic transformation;
2. families' young and old; and
3. national identity.

The Digital Strategy also links closely with the New Zealand Government's Growth and Innovation Framework and the Sustainable Development plan.

The strategy committed up to NZ\$400 million to a wide range of digital initiatives delivered by government, business and the NGO sector. Whilst some of these were existing work programmes, there was approximately NZ\$60 million of new funding aligned with the Growth and Innovation Framework, which included two contestable seed funding programmes:

- The Broadband Challenge (NZ\$24 million), focussed on broadband infrastructure partnerships in key urban centres; and
- the Community Partnership Fund (NZ\$21 million), which provided matched funding for grass-roots ICT initiatives.

The strategy encompasses projects such as the Provincial Broadband Extension (PROBE), a regional broadband initiative that had been extended to address broadband availability in remote/under-served communities, a digital content strategy and a number of projects within the Ministry of Education. These included the innovative Digital Opportunities project, which funds partnerships between schools, ICT organisations and the Ministry of Education in order to "improve learning through the innovative use of leading edge technologies" (Ministry of Education, 2006, p.1).

Within local government across New Zealand, there appears to be slow but increasing recognition of the role of ICT (Williamson, 2007). Some city and district councils have started

to adopt ICT within service delivery and community development frameworks, most notably these include Porirua, Waitakere and Wellington, through an ICT policy that supports community ICT and the early stages of eDemocracy in the city (Wellington City Council, 2006).

Numerous CI initiatives exist across New Zealand. These include projects involving literacy and training, access to websites, telecentres, management tools and discussion forums. Many of these appear highly successful with some being world-leaders and local research indicates that ICT is improving outcomes for stakeholders of community organisations by making services more inclusive and accessible (B. Craig, Dashfield, & Thomson, 2003; B. Craig & Williamson, 2005a). Research indicates that local CI initiatives, in general, tend to be over-reliant on goodwill and voluntary resources and because of this their continued existence can be perilous (Day, 2004a; Dederich, Hausman, & Maxwell, 2006; Henderson, 2006). This pattern is evident in New Zealand (Williamson, 2005).

## 1.6 Literature Informing this Research

The foregoing section contextualised the research location as well as the underlying historical and policy environments. The next section will identify a broad range of critical literature relating to community ICT and the provision of eDemocracy from a range of perspectives that inform this research. The historical antecedents to ICT, including general theories of literacy, government and community participation, are considered against the critical understandings and commentaries about government and governance. These are supplemented by contemporary issues for local government in New Zealand and elsewhere. The emergent nature of the field of study examined here provides challenges in maintaining currency with the literature. However, every effort has been made to ensure that literature was constantly reviewed and synthesized during the research project. Literature was drawn from the following research areas and constructs:

- **Community development** and **community networking** concerns projects that build capability or create connections amongst groups and individuals. It is used in this research to locate legitimate concerns and projects within a host community.

Definitions of 'community' are considered in three potentially overlapping forms: Locality, interest and attachment (Crow & Allan, 1994; Gaved & Anderson, 2006; Hillery, 1955; Willmot, 1986, 1989)<sup>10</sup>.

- **Community Informatics (CI)** is the study of "how ICT can help achieve a community's social, economic or cultural goals" (Gurstein, 2000, p.3). CI literature informs this study by locating the technology, the application and context of that technology within community settings. Literature will be used to examine how ICT affects social connections and social capital. CI also builds on community profiling, asset-based community building and longitudinal social network analysis.
- DeWiel (2000) sees **Civil Society** as originally synonymous with political society but currently the term is used to refer to public institutions beyond the state. This research is informed by literature and research relating to public governance, government and democracy, including the role of ICT in these processes, as they interact with civil society.
- **Social capital** reflects the resources that communities have available for support, trust, obligation and reciprocity (Putnam, 2000). It is considered in the context of participation and strong democracy and its correlation to ICT (Gaved & Anderson, 2006; Quan-Haase & Wellman, 2004).

Behind this research is the observation that society is being fundamentally changed through its exposure to technology (Ellul, 1964; Habermas, 1979, 1987a, 1987b; Postman, 1992). Thus, there is a need to situate this research within a wider socio-political discourse to ensure that the use of ICT is contextualised and viewed as a tool which has the potential to emancipate and transform but which paradoxically can also be used to control and or be controlled (Day, 2004b; Feenberg, 1999; Rheingold, 1994, 2002). Enablers and barriers to the uptake and eventual ubiquity of ICT will also be addressed, drawing on research by Castells (2001), Feenberg (1999), Glogoff (2001), Gurstein (2000) and Moore (1999). Since a focus of this research is the impact of ICT on democratic processes, it is be pertinent to consider the origins of democracy and to address current theoretical and applied models of government, democracy and governance and their position in society (DeWiel, 2000; Feenberg, 1992, 1995; Friedland, 2001; Habermas, 1987a; Marx, 1981; Oldenburg, 1991; Ritzer, 2000). By extending this critique, the relationship of ICT to democratic practices and processes will be considered

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<sup>10</sup> See 'Community development' on page 29 for a detailed discussion on definitions of community.

(S. Coleman & Gøtze, 2002; Dahlberg, 2001a; Jordan, 1999; Loader, 1997; Mälkiä, Anttiroiko, & Savolainen, 2004; Noveck, 1999).

Literature addressing civil society and social capital, including participation at a community (Oldenburg, 1991; Putnam, 2000) and political level (S. Coleman & Gøtze, 2002; Norris, 2002) is considered and informs the research with regard to issues of motivation, participation and barriers. Inherent in this is the potential for ICT to change the processes of government and the interactions that occur between government and citizens (S. Coleman & Gøtze, 2002; Mälkiä, Anttiroiko, & Savolainen, 2004), such as the ability of ICT to provide tools for strong democracy and participation in the processes of governance (Bimber, 1998; Schuler, 2000). Literature relating to the social impact of the internet will allow this research to be contextualised more broadly (Katz & Rice, 2002).

Issues of power and control relating to ICT are another aspect of this research. Castells (1999) sees traditional sources of exclusion being duplicated online and Bollier (2002) cautions that despite (or perhaps because of) the internet is the largest public commons, serious attempts are being made to manage, control or own both the networks and the flow of information. Within government, citizen involvement in the design of processes should not be assumed (Ranerup, 2000), despite the rhetoric of eGovernment, which values engaged citizens (Office of the e-Envoy, 2001). Literature which describes how the internet has been used to successfully challenge hegemonies and subvert existing discourses will be used to identify potential models for online engagement (Canadian Security Intelligence Service, 2000; Wakeford, 2000; White, 1999; Woodland, 2000).

This commentary specifically alludes to the notion of literacy as a critical element in individual and community empowerment (Freire, 1972, 1974) and the research considers the effective use of ICT and by extension information literacy. Effective use is defined as “the capacity and opportunity to successfully integrate ICT into the accomplishment of self or collaboratively identified goals” (Gurstein, 2003, p.9), noting that determinants of effectiveness must be cultural and political as well as technological (Mälkiä, Anttiroiko, & Savolainen, 2004).

The foregoing review identifies key literature concerning the impact of ICT on communities and recognises the importance of situating ICT within a societal context. It highlights the need for and value of, research which explores the impact of ICT in facilitating and influencing increased and effective participation of citizens in the design, development and deployment of democratic processes. This is particularly important where such research is itself grounded in a community and forms part of a community driven process and guided the research in the following ways:

- CI and civil society theories will assist the design of the study by supporting an understanding of the use of ICT for political and democratic purposes in a regional community setting; and
- Community development and constructions of social capital will provide an understanding of community models.

## **1.7 Research Framework and Methodology**

This interpretive research was informed by Critical Social Theory (CST), drawing upon research in the field of CI and used an explanatory mixed methods approach, combining two sequential data collection methods (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007; Morse, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). A survey instrument was developed to collect quantitative and embedded qualitative data in order to gain a broad understanding of the use of ICT amongst people engaged in community activity in New Zealand. This supported the development of a second phase of qualitative semi-structured interviews with participants connected with local CI initiatives in Waitakere City. These were then analysed using Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) to develop a theory of emergent local, citizen-focussed eDemocracy.

CST allows the researcher to see participants as operating within a number of contrasting and sometimes competing social systems (Kemmis, 2001). The use of CST promotes a process of inquiry that can lead to social transformation through the critique of ideological domination (May, 1996). Knowledge is progressed through a process of open discussion and criticism and is subject to continuous refinement as a result of criticism and examination



from others (Baert, 1998). The ultimate goal of CST is to understand the relationships that exist between a public sphere and the private citizen (Andersen, 2000). The interpretive theory emerging from the research can then be contextualised within a broader socio-political context.

This research adopted Habermas' theories of the public sphere and of communicative action in the context of local democracy, thus privileging identification of the ways in which the steering politico-bureaucratic media of local and central government colonised the lifeworld of the individual. Secondly, it has been used to suggest normative conditions for engagement that are required to establish true dialogue and to create the potential to move the locus of power back to the individual and the community as a whole.

Limitations in the research approach are identified and addressed in this study design. These include researcher bias, pressure from external management or funding agencies, academic imperative overriding participant's needs and the risk that in reality the researcher is simply becoming an expert in and advocate for the grounded results observed, not for the community itself. The emergent and participatory nature of this research project means that issues of research ownership must be addressed with participants (David, 2002; McKay & Marshall, 2001) and the methodology itself could be considered a limitation in that it can influence the nature and process of the research.

A further limitation is the use of CST. It is accepted that the language of critical theory is complex and that it is difficult to convey this more simply without it losing key meanings; CST has its own language and I have attempted to use this appropriately whilst remaining cognisant of the general reader. CST can also be seen as overly theoretical. Whilst a more narrative or phenomenological approach could have been adopted, the emergent nature of the research location and the desire to privilege issues of power and communication suggest that CST was more appropriate in this instance. An underlying narrative approach to the presentation of the qualitative data has been adopted, particularly for Phase II.

Participants for the first phase of this research (Phase I) were selected from people involved in community activity and using ICT within New Zealand. Participants included those active in the community as volunteers, community activists and politicians, people working for or volunteering with NGOs and people in central and local government who had a role that included active involvement in local communities or interest groups. Participants for Phase II were drawn from people directly involved in Waitakere City's EcoTech project, its successors and sub-projects. The spatial limitations of the study combined with cultural limitations restricted the scope for recruiting participants. Furthermore, some potential participants were unable to be involved in research beyond their existing (usually voluntary) commitment. In an attempt to recruit as broadly as possible for the research, participants were drawn from the following categories:

- Community activists
- Community organisations
- Funding agencies
- Macro, or umbrella, networks
- Māori
- Local government (politicians and officers)
- Central government (politicians, representatives of agencies and developers of public policy)

Data collection was undertaken in two sequential stages:

- Survey
- Interviews

### **1.7.1 Survey**

Potential participants were identified from the above criteria and snowball sampling (De Vaus, 2003) used to expand the potential number of respondents. A survey instrument was used to collect qualitative and quantitative data on issues related to ICT uptake, usage, motivation and barriers to adoption in a community or local democratic context. Rigour was ensured through a process of construct validity and survey testing (De Vaus, 2003). The data was analysed both quantitatively (for demographic and statistical information) and

qualitatively (for emergent themes). The findings were then used to support the design of the interview instrument. Because of the limited sample size available in Waitakere City, survey recruitment was extended to cover all of New Zealand.

## 1.7.2 Interviews

Following analysis of the survey data, a subset of participants was identified from those living, working or volunteering in Waitakere City. These and other key informants were then invited to take part in semi-structured interviews during Phase II. The data obtained during these interviews was analysed qualitatively using Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) to determine emergent themes and to identify a basic social process.

## 1.7.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Tolich and Davidson (1999) suggest that undertaking social science research in New Zealand requires the researcher to constantly consider the ethical implications associated with the country's size. They implore that researchers "think of New Zealand as though it is a small town" (p.77) and, whilst they note that this is an unusual principle amongst researchers in the developed world, it stems from the smallness of the communities and, therefore, the increased risk of revealing information about them which might be harmful or denigrating. The anonymity and confidentiality of research participants is affected particularly as, in this case, some are public figures and therefore their role lent weight to what they said. Whilst the respondents to the survey remain anonymous, all participants in Phase II have agreed to be identified. Attempting to obscure the identity of a public figure is "usually not a feasible option, not only would it destroy the salience of the interview, but also it is impossible" (Corti, Day, & Backhouse, 2000, p.12).

## 1.8 Limitations

Two factors limited the scope and nature of the research, namely:

- The study location
- The population within that location

## 1.8.1 Study Location

The ability to recruit participants within the original study location (Waitakere City) was considered problematic and was further limited by the motivation, levels of commitment and availability of those who are active in the community, voluntary and political sectors of the city. To overcome this, a mixed methods approach that introduced a New Zealand-wide phase of data collection was used.

## 1.8.2 Population

As the research occurred, a number of political changes affected the nature of the CI environment in the city. A City Council working group on community technology was dissolved and new projects emerged. Political actors who had been instrumental in early stages of the research were not re-elected and their involvement waned.

The research participants were drawn from a relatively small group, to which the researcher belonged, particularly for Phase II. It was necessary to ensure not only that the research process was rigorous but that no coercion of participants occurred in the study and this was achieved through careful design, testing and validation of the operationalized research.

## 1.9 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is structured in the following way:

<b>Chapter 1 – Introduction</b>	An overview of the study, explanation of the research aims, objectives and research questions and background to the research.
<b>Chapter 2 – Literature Review</b>	The contextualisation of the study through a critical review of the significant literature.
<b>Chapter 3 – Research</b>	This chapter provides a comprehensive consideration of the

<b>Context and Methodology</b>	philosophical framework for the research, including an exploration of critical social theory. The mixed methods approach is introduced and an overview of both of the sequential data collection phases is provided to contextualise them in relation to the study design.
<b>Chapter 4 – Research Design: Survey Instrument</b>	This chapter describes the methodology and design of the survey instrument used in Phase I of data collection. It includes a description of the survey design phase, validity testing, a discussion on amendments made as a result of testing and a detailed description of the survey structure, content and administration.
<b>Chapter 5 – Survey Analysis and Discussion</b>	The results of the survey instrument are comprehensively described and then compared and contrasted with literature in order to situate the study and contextualise the scope for Phase II of data collection.
<b>Chapter 6 – Research Design: Interviews</b>	This chapter describes the development of the interview instrument and provides a detailed description of Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM). It includes a discussion on the key stages of a grounded theory project, including data collection, saturation, discovery, conceptualisation and assessment and an overview of the philosophical and historical context of GTM.
<b>Chapter 7 – Interview Analysis and Discussion</b>	The emergent themes from Phase II of data collection are presented and discussed in the context of applicable literature.
<b>Chapter 8 – A Model for</b>	The basic social process is explored and the findings of both

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phases are drawn together along with pertinent literature to present an emergent model for local eDemocracy.

**Chapter 9 – Conclusion and recommendations**

This chapter draws together conclusions from the research, reflects on the research process and presents recommendations for policy and practice and suggestions for further research.

# Chapter 2 – Literature Review

## 2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has defined the scope of this research and broadly addressed a body of literature that contextualises and situates this research. This chapter will explore the literature in greater detail, elaborating on the earlier discussion in order to further contextualise the study and to establish a framework that informs the design of the research. The foregoing chapter has identified areas for further discussion that includes the impact of ICT on communities and the importance of situating ICT within a societal context. This chapter will review a range of literature that relates to governance, social capital, community ICT and the development and provision of eDemocracy from a number of perspectives. These include the historical antecedents to CI and eDemocracy, including general theories of government and community, which are considered against the critical understandings and commentaries around governance and democracy. Having done this, the chapter concludes by summarising the key findings that were used to assist with the research design.

## 2.2 Governance and Democracy

Chapter 1 described pertinent details of the New Zealand democratic systems. This section presents a broad overview of the nature of the western democratic process, which is pertinent to the study context. King and Schneider (1991) define 'governance' to "denote the command mechanism of a social system and its actions that endeavour to provide security, prosperity, coherence, order and continuity to the system" (p.182). They go on to argue that "the concept of governance should not be restricted to national and international systems but should be used in relation to regional, provincial and local governments as well as to other social systems" (p.182), including the public and private sectors. Such a definition does not

consider the role of individuals within such systems, assuming uncritically that the 'system' being described is acting in the best interests of its members (even if the members of the system do not perceive this to be the case).

Whilst democracy has its roots in early spiritual teachings, its modern evolution can be traced to philosophers such as John Locke. He put forward a model for government based on the concept of political power as the "right of making laws... for the regulating and preserving of property, and of employing the force of the community in the execution of such laws, and in the defence of the commonwealth from foreign injury, and all this only for the public good" (Locke, 1690, § 1). Locke assumed that "all men are naturally in ... a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons as they think fit" (Locke, 1690, § 4); although he tempered this somewhat with a nod to feudal powers.

For Locke, a political or civil society existed "wherever any number of men, in the state of Nature, enter into society to make one people one body politic under one supreme government" (Locke, 1690, § 89). A social order only exists through the formation of government constituted through the direct consent of those being governed and the view of the majority accepted as determinative over the conduct of individuals. In this context, the actual structure of government matters less than the ability to provide for social order and the common good by the passing of laws. The most significant transformation in government over the last three hundred years was not from feudal monarchy to parliamentary democracy, but universal suffrage, such that every adult citizen, with a few notable exceptions, is given the right and opportunity to vote. British reforms and the French Revolution reduced the power of monarchy, replacing it with a newly-powerful middle class. Since Britain and its colonies, including New Zealand, did not undergo a revolution of the workers and peasants, this status quo was only changed by the onset of universal suffrage, which New Zealand became the first country to embrace in 1893, making it the first country to give women a vote (Reeves, 1924).



## 2.3 Civil Society

Assuming the foregoing, a nation is an organised and self-regulating system of individuals, societies and political systems. Concepts of a civil society have their origins in the ideas of Aristotle and are often seen as “the space of uncoerced human association” filled with sets “of relational networks” (Walzer, 1995, p.7). Increasingly, there is a tendency to restrict this definition further such that civil society becomes synonymous with “the realm of public institutions apart from the state” (DeWiel, 2000, p.11). Particularly in liberal societies, it usually refers to voluntary associational life, including private, civic and political participation that is autonomous of the state, is not inter-governmental and not part of the private sector (Young, 2000). WSIS (2004) adopts such a definition of civil society, further emphasising the inclusion of networks and movements as well as formal organisations and assumes that such groups are most likely to be non-profit-making, can act locally, nationally and internationally and that these groups are focussed on defending and promoting the social, economic and cultural interests of their stakeholders to achieve mutual benefit.

Civil society, therefore, reflects an inter-connection of individuals and groups beyond economic and state systems, with varying degrees of formality and structure. Social movements come and go, emerging to challenge hegemonic values, existing social orientations and “the modality of the social use of resources and cultural models” (Touraine, 2000, p.90).

Civil society is an inherent component of a nation's democratic life (Verba, Nie, & Kim, 1978). In liberal societies, civil society extends beyond “moments of opposition to authoritarian rule” (Young, 2000, p.155) taking on a central role in promoting democracy and social welfare. Civil society is a “place where collective actions are initiated to free social actors and combat the workings of economy dominated by profit and the political will to dominance” (Touraine, 2000, p.97). Its demands are ethical and cultural, not economic and, therefore, can “construct a set of mediations which are at once social and political, and which exist midway between political programmes and social situations” (Touraine, 2000, p.97). Non-government organisations (NGOs) are one such example of this. Civil society enables a

public sphere in which systems are held to account, where citizens are able to challenge the misuse of power and in which influence can be exercised. It is the coordination of uncoerced action through communicative interaction (Habermas, 1987a):

In the associations of civil society people co-ordinate their actions by discussion and working things out, rather than by checking prices or looking up rules (Young, 2000, p.159).

Governments in particular often assume that an active civil society and participation in it should be encouraged because it:

1. leads to better and more responsive services;
2. tackles people's disengagement from politics and the democratic process; and
3. builds social capital<sup>11</sup> (Skidmore, Bound, & Lownsborough, 2006, p.3).

The Council of Europe places participation at the heart of democracy and considers local democracy to be a cornerstone of this process, where "citizens committed to democratic values, mindful of their civic duties and who become involved in political activity are the lifeblood of any democratic system" (Council of Europe, 2004, p.1). Participatory frameworks support the building of social capital and actively engage people in democratic processes. However, such social capital appears "valuable to some people at some times and places, and not at all valuable in others" (Skidmore, Bound, & Lownsborough, 2006, p.11) and is not evenly distributed. Social capital is often embodied in the key relationships that exist between individuals or organisations in the community and access to it is negotiated via a range of background factors that can include socio-economic status, geographical circumstances, ethnicity, religion, age and gender (Coleman, 1988; Putnam 2000). The ability to participate effectively is not neutral and is intensified or mitigated by the above factors and because those participating in community decision-making are often a small inside elite. The systems of democratic engagement are themselves a barrier to participation for some, controlled as they are by government (Bowler, Donovan & Karp, 2002).

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<sup>11</sup> A detailed discussion of social capital follows on page 32.

### 2.3.1 Exclusion and Class

Underlying much of the work of Freire (1972, 1974; Freire & Shor, 1987) and other critical and transformative models is the concept of exclusion (Bhalla & Lapeyre, 1999) where knowledge, power and language are inter-connected:

Knowledge and power are intertwined (the power/knowledge nexus); knowledge shapes the social context; power and knowledge are exercised in relation to a resistance; and meanings are historically situated, constructed and deconstructed through language (Giddings, 1997, p.13).

Bhalla and Lapeyre (1999) describe the effect of exclusion as economic marginalisation, which in turn creates political marginalisation and polarisation and ultimately social marginalisation, as networks and opportunities for participation in society are lost. Class is itself a subset of this, caught up in the dual dialectics of privilege and marginalisation, both of which can occur for reasons of class but also as a result of gender, ethnicity, age, religion, ableness or sexual identity (Giddings, 1997). Bourdieu (1986) developed a definition of class that goes beyond the purely economic concepts of Marx (1981), marrying these with Weber's concept of class as being a group sharing common interests, lifestyle and prestige (Pitt, 1977). In doing so, Bourdieu identifies two primary types of symbolic capital, 'economic capital' and 'habitus' as being determinants of class (Lawley, 1994). Bourdieu's concept of habitus is particularly useful in positioning strong democracy. As Croteau (1999) argues, Bourdieu created a definition of class based on a common set of identifiable conditions that produce a common conditioning. Lawley agrees, stating that cultural capital "also functions as a major factor in class definition" (1994, p.4), which relates directly to the concept of lived experience, a fundamental principle of CST.

#### 2.3.1.1 Exclusion and Class in New Zealand

New Zealand was often described a 'classless society' (Pitt, 1977; Reeves, 1924). As recently as 1969, Jackson and Harre (cited in Pitt, 1977) stated that New Zealand had no poor and, therefore, no class struggle. However, major inter-generational socio-economic disparities and exclusion clearly exist, particularly amongst Māori (Durie, 1998). Such disparities align with definitions of class given above and therefore the situation in New Zealand can be

viewed in the context of a class struggle. As Chapple (2000) concludes, issues of both class and poverty do exist in New Zealand and this disparity has worsened since the economic reforms of the 1980s.

### 2.3.2 The Digital Divide

The elevation of the individual and the free-market have left in their wake an underclass that lacks the opportunities, knowledge or access to resources creating inequity in many social and economic areas with a concomitant effect on equitable access to ICT (ALICE, 1998; Himmelsbach, 2003). The concept of a 'digital divide' emerges from discussions on the affordability of access to ICT and particularly the internet in low-income urban and rural communities in the US, concluding that new technologies are aggravating the divide between rich and poor (Goslee, 1998; Servon, 2002). Norris (2001) agrees, observing that deprivation of access to ICT results in a failure to become technological literate, which is a key factor for success in an 'Information Society'. Those who are already marginalized are becoming even more so because they are unable to access the new technologies available to wealthier communities (Norris, 2001; Servon, 2002).

The digital divide is the difference between universal access to ICT and current levels of adoption and remains significant, requiring consideration in the context of democratic participation. Failing to alleviate this divide has the potential to increase rather than diminish any democratic divide (Chen, 2007). Significant barriers to the adoption of ICT remain. The term 'digital divide' is somewhat misleading since the root causes vary and are the result of broader socio-economic or educational disparity (Chadwick, 2006; Norris, 2001). Poverty is a barrier to adopting ICT, hence the importance of public-access facilities (Middleton, Longford, Clement & Potter, 2006). Adoption is often related to educational achievement, hence the importance of just-in-time skill acquisition and lifelong learning strategies. Motivation to want to use ICT is also a barrier (Servon, 2002). Chen (2007) identifies eight components of a digital divide:

- Bandwidth (slow access)
- Digital (lack of access)

- Educational (lack of skills)
- Linguistic
- Mobility (cannot reach or afford ICT)
- Motivation
- Time poor
- Disability (p.33)

Hacker and Dijk (2000) suggest that these factors compound to create four primary barriers to access:

- Mental access – A lack of interest, motivation or anxiety.
- Material access – The inability to obtain access to technology.
- Skills access – Lack of ‘digital’ skills.
- Usage access – Lack of significant usage opportunities.

Norris (2002) suggests a fifth barrier, which is pertinent here:

- Democratic access – Unable to harness ICT for political participation or to influence.

Some argue that this divide is short term and largely irrelevant; that it will be resolved over time by market forces (Compaine, 2001). Others, including Castells (2000) and Chadwick (2006), disagree arguing that the societal transformation brought about by access to information (and the related disadvantage of not having access) is too significant to leave to chance. Information and communication enables individuals and communities to shape their identities, develop a shared sense of community and to gain insight into other, different communities (Keeble & Loader, 2001).

There is a strong correlation between income and access to ICT in New Zealand (as elsewhere). The urban poor, those living in rural locations and the elderly are more likely to lack internet access at home (B. Craig, 2003). According to the 2001 New Zealand Census of Population, 50% of those owning their own home had internet access as opposed to only 11% of those living in state or local authority rental housing (Statistics New Zealand, 2002a). Only

50% of single-parent families had internet access at home, compared to 78% of two-parent families (Ministry of Social Development, 2006). In 2004, over 65% of New Zealand adults had internet access, the 8<sup>th</sup> highest in the OECD and up from 37% in 2000, rising to 70% in the 18-64 age group and to 80% for families from ethnic communities<sup>12</sup> (Ministry of Social Development, 2006). Pacific people were least likely to have internet access (39.5%), followed by Māori (45%). Māori also experienced the lowest growth in internet usage over the four years to 2004. According to Parker (2003), poor uptake amongst Māori is the result of lower household incomes and poor educational outcomes.

## 2.4 Social Capital

Social capital as a theoretical concept originates in its modern form with the works of Bourdieu (1970) and Coleman (1988) and emphasises the importance of social ties and shared norms relating to the wellbeing of society as a whole as well as economic efficiency. Social Capital is a measure of the connectedness of individuals to each other and the “social networks and norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (Putnam, 2000, p.19). As Coleman (1988, p.1) suggests, “unlike other forms of capital, social capital adheres to the structure of relations between and among actors.” The value of a civil society is not in the good intent of the individual but in the way those individuals are connected and embedded within a “dense network of reciprocal relations” (Putnam, 2000, p.19). Therefore, for Bourdieu (1970; 1983), social capital is the aggregate of actual or potential resources that are linked to the existence of a lasting network. Such semi-institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition provide group members with the backing of the collective (and collectively owned social capital), providing both support and credibility. Relationships are socially instituted and guaranteed (to others) by the application of a common name (such as a family, a club, an association, a school or a political party) and by a set of instituting acts that are designed to simultaneously form and inform those who undergo them. In the case of social capital, such acts occur in, and are both maintained and re-enforced by, exchange.

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<sup>12</sup> ‘Ethnic’ is defined as non-Māori, non-Pacific People and non-European (Office of Ethnic Affairs, 2002).

Hence, the amount of social capital possessed by an individual depends on the size of the network of connections that can be effectively mobilized and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed by those to whom that actor is connected. Whilst social capital cannot simply be reduced to measures of economic or individual human capital, it remains interconnected with them because the exchanges that create a mutual acknowledgment presuppose recognition of at least a minimum of objective homogeneity, and this in turn multiplies that effect on the capital possessed individually (Bourdieu, 1983; Fukuyama, 1999; Norris, 2002). Social capital can be divided into three distinct types and, for good social supports and wide-spread connectedness, a balance between all three types of social capital is required (Bourdieu, 1986; Dickson, 2004; Putnam, 2000):

<b>Bonding</b>	Connects similar groups and people (such as family/ <i>whanau</i> , close friends, ethnic or religious groups).
<b>Bridging</b>	Connects people across different social divisions, which could be related to age, class, occupation, ethnicity, religion, political beliefs, culture or location.
<b>Linking</b>	Connects individuals, groups and networks to people of influence (or power) in formalised institutions, such as government, police or schools.

Social capital is seen by some as a major enabler of democracy (Cox, 2002) with significant political consequences (Norris, 2002; Putnam, 2000). Where social capital is strong, levels of political sophistication are increased and the facilities within civil society for democratic engagement are enhanced (Tavits, 2006). Thus, strong social capital can foster more participatory forms of government and higher levels not only of involvement but also partnership between government, its agencies and civil society. The degree of social capital that exists, directly affects the government's ability to be responsive to societal needs and affects the level of trust felt by citizens towards the government (Dickson, 2004). However, this level of trust is further mediated by the performance of both the government and the wider economy (Newton, 2006; Tavits, 2006).

Some social commentators (especially Putnam, 2000; Putnam & Goss, 2002) have noted that, in the US at least, engagement in traditional community activities has been declining since the 1960s and hence social capital has fallen. Putnam posits a restructuring of society where individual activities have replaced social groups and membership of civic or community organisations (Putnam, 2000; Putnam & Goss, 2002). Whilst many commentators concur with Putnam's findings, others, such as Norris (2002) caution that this blanket statement is too simplistic, highlighting what she sees as a recent revival in political involvement thereby challenging Putnam's findings. Whilst Putnam suggests that falling social capital and the inherent decline in trust associated with that causes disaffection with politics and democracy, Newton (2006), argues that this is only one cause of the situation and that the perceived decline in the performance of governments is equally to blame. Newton suggests that, whilst social capital is a necessary foundation for democratic support, it is not of itself a sufficient cause for the decline in democratic participation. To support this argument, Coleman and Götze (2002) highlight a measurable historical decline in political interest and activity across the majority of post-industrial nations where no comparable and measurable equivalent decline in social capital exists across the same nations (Cox, 2002; Hall, 2002; Offe & Fuchs, 2002). Putnam's theory is further criticised by Fischer (2001), who observes that, even within the US, the reported decrease is not consistently reflected across all measures of social capital and, secondly, that where Putnam sees the decrease as substantial, Fischer argues that it is negligible and short-term.

In the UK, it appears that social capital has remained relatively unchanged over the last 50 years, however, there are indications of increasing disparity in its distribution. Hall (2002) suggests that this maintenance of social capital has partly occurred due to increasing levels educational achievement and partly to the maintenance of high levels of political engagement and that there is a strong correlation between social trust and political trust. The British experience highlights that, whilst social capital is often seen as a civil society good, it can also be considered a local good, offering most benefit to those within the networks that constitute it. As Hall (2002, p.55-56) observes, "although all may have benefited from Britain's capacity to maintain high levels of social capital since the war, some seem to have gained more substantially than others." Disturbingly, Hall presents a pattern where the



increasing reality is that of a two-tier nation. On one side, a well connected and active group of generally prosperous citizens and on the other, those whose association and involvement in politics is limited. The latter category has an over-representation of the working class and the young (although the age gap is perhaps transitory).

Research in Sweden indicates that, despite some dissatisfaction with the democratic process, there is no evidence that social capital is in decline (Rothstein, 2002). An analysis of Australian data provides “contradictory indicators of whether social capital is declining, stable or growing” (Cox, 2002, p.356). In a summary of a discussion of changes in social capital across a range of countries, Putnam (2002) observes that trends common to almost all countries studied include a decline in voter turnout and in engagement with political parties. Putnam considers this decline most striking as it has occurred despite an increase in the overall level of educational achievement, usually an indicator of greater political involvement. However, Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) suggest that some areas of voluntary and democratic activity are actually growing and that a reduction in voter turnout does not suggest a general erosion in community or political activity. They also observe a trend emerging towards a class-based bias in western countries, which is a result of the economic reforms of the 1980s and 1990s. However, despite this and significant declines in both union membership and church attendance, it is not possible to say that social capital is declining globally.

International analyses of social capital serve to warn against taking an essentialising view of the world as being homogenous and US-centric. They strongly indicate that the nature of social capital and the factors affecting it are topical and, if not localised, then affected by local manifestations of global trends (Newton, 2006). Academic discussion of social capital is, in general, limited to ‘Western liberal society’<sup>13</sup> which has been influenced since the late 1980s by market economies, globalisation, partial deregulation, privatisation of state functions and welfare reform. Whilst these countries possess great wealth, its distribution is increasingly uneven and the market reforms have left post-war managed economies, formerly associated

with prosperity and stability, in a void of neo-liberal rhetoric or emerging 'third way' discourses, both of which concern themselves with resolving the "destructive consequences for social solidarity" of rampant individualism (Giddens, 1998, p.35). The natural response to such a void, some suggest, is an attempt to over-dramatise "a social commentary that sees the social fabric being destroyed and social cohesion diminishing" (Pérez-Díaz, 2002, p.245).

### 2.4.1 Social Capital in New Zealand

In New Zealand, there is evidence of group disparities in levels of social capital. However, these are not easy to measure and cannot be divided into simple measures of social class (Chapple, 2000). Overall, social capital in New Zealand is relatively strong by international standards. If not actually rising, social capital is at least relatively constant. Whilst social trust in New Zealand appears to be rising, in Australia, the US and the UK it is falling (Dickson, 2004). Forty two percent of adult New Zealanders were members of a sporting organisation and 25% members of arts organisations. In comparison, the average membership across 32 European countries is 16% and 10% respectively.

In New Zealand, social capital has become an increasingly important measure of civil society. Eketone and Shannon (2006, p.213) note that the widespread uptake of social capital in policy areas since the 1990s has led to a "revival in community development as a major strategy for change" and a focus on measuring and understanding community connectedness with the intention of social and economic deficit and building community capacity.

The use of social capital in New Zealand has led to community development projects often being initiated using the rhetoric of 'local partnerships' and 'capacity building'. But the reality is that they often require significant funding from central and local government and are rarely independently sustainable. Examples in Waitakere include the Ranui Action Project and the Waitakere Wellbeing and Collaboration Project (Craig & Lerner, 2002).

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<sup>13</sup> This assumes a system where the value of the individual and of individual freedom of expression is privileged and where democratic systems are in place, usually in the form of a representative system of government (Dieckhoff, 2004).

Concern is being expressed that attempts to use social capital as a way of reducing deficits is simply restoring old inequalities rather than directly addressing key issues of social justice that affect deprived communities. Hence, there is an element of 'doing to' those communities, rather than 'doing with' (Eketone & Shannon, 2006).

## 2.4.2 Measuring Social Capital

Fukuyama (1995) and Norris (2002) note that social capital is not easy to measure; there is no standard and it will always remain to some degree intangible and subjective, causing problems when comparing social capital in different geographic locations and in measuring changes in levels. Putnam's (2000) solution is to promote the principle that social capital is the sum of the membership of all groups within a society. Both the number of groups and the membership of those groups are, Putnam argues, important measures of the health of a civil society. Fukuyama extends this to include the internal cohesiveness of groups, their hierarchy and, further still, to measure the way groups relate to outsiders, however, he warns that:

Producing anything like a believable census of a society's stock of social capital is a nearly impossible task, since it involves multiplying numbers that are either subjectively estimated or simply nonexistent (Fukuyama, 1995, p.8).

A New Zealand draft framework for measuring social capital was developed in 1997 with a view to its use in policy development for both local and central government. Last updated in 2001, the framework has four inter-connected dimensions (Statistics New Zealand, 2002b, p.4):

<b>Behaviour</b>	What people do.
<b>Attitudes and values</b>	What people feel or believe.
<b>Population groups</b>	What people are.
<b>Organisations</b>	Where organisations are viewed as social structures.

Emphasising the issue of comparable measures of social capital, Statistics New Zealand argues that New Zealand has some unique issues involved in the measurement of social capital, particularly in ensuring that indicators are appropriate to local conditions and that Māori concepts are appropriately incorporated into definitions and measurements.

### 2.4.3 Social Capital and ICT

For Bourdieu (1970), social networks were based on material and symbolic exchanges and assume an explicit acknowledgement of an economic or social space within a geographical location. New networked ICT changes this concept somewhat, since physical proximity is, theoretically at least, no longer a pre-requisite for the creation of social networks (Quan-Haase & Wellman, 2004). Further, ICT is inherently implicated in the advance of globalisation and the societal changes this brings (Giddens, 1998).

Ellul (1964) argues that technology (in its broadest sense) cannot be isolated from the social and human factors that surround it, indeed it forms a core part of the ecology in which it is situated (Gaved & Anderson, 2006). The internet in particular has dramatically affected the way people communicate and has, in many cases, extended social and community boundaries (Quan-Haase & Wellman, 2004; Wellman, Boase, & Chen, 2002; Wellman & Haythornthwaite, 2002). Whilst it is often anecdotally perceived or assumed that ICT contributes to the maintenance or increasing of social capital, there is little empirical evidence to support this over the long term (Gaved & Anderson, 2006). As Chen (2004, p.6) observes “research into the social and political effect and implications of new media lags behind practice.”

Stern and Dillman (2006) observe that internet access reflects positively on an individual's level of activity within their local community and that it provides better support for network building beyond that community. In this vein, ICT has the potential to locate citizens at the centre of the decision-making process, thus profoundly altering the processes of government and democracy. In theory at least, ICT has the potential to arrest the decline in political involvement discussed earlier in this chapter (S. Coleman & Götze, 2002). Yet the internet's potential as a tool for engaging in the political arena might be limited, not by technology but

by human perception (Wright, 2006). Figure 3 suggests that, in the US at least, the number of citizens who see the internet offering such potential is levelling off or even declining slightly. This could in part relate to the continued uptake of the internet and concomitant shift in the demographic from the wealth and education levels of early adopters and, therefore, propensity to be politically active. To date, eDemocracy has not necessarily engaged more people, rather it appears to have increased engagement amongst those already active and presented opportunities to remain engaged in different ways (Bimber, 2004).

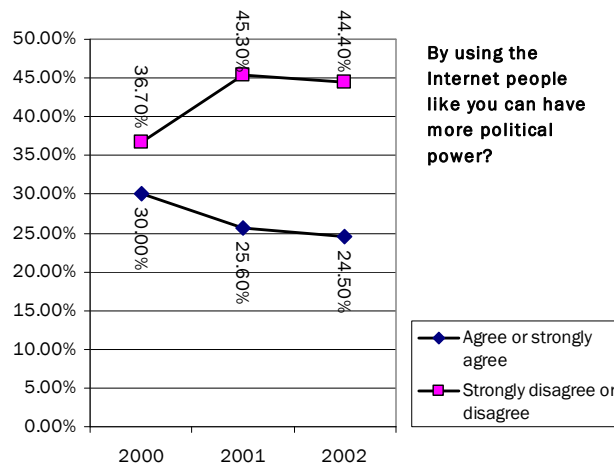


Figure 3: internet users have more political power? (UCLA Center for Communications Policy, 2003, p.70)

The same levelling off or slight decline is seen in Figure 4, which suggests that any public perception that the internet will increase the ability of citizens to have a say in what government does is falling, giving credence to Bimber's (2004) suggestion that online processes might be focussed on more effectively harnessing the already engaged than in attempting to re-engage those who are marginalised.

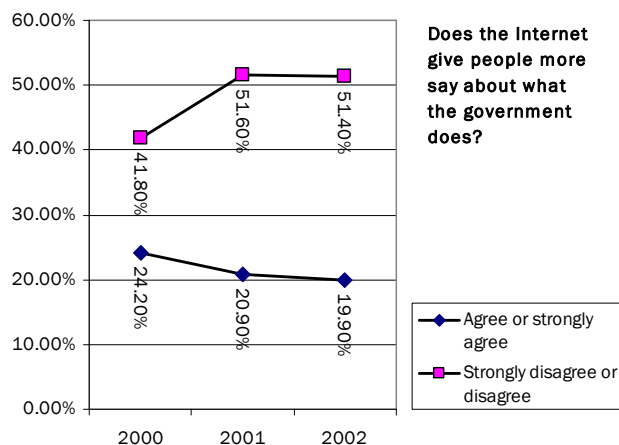


Figure 4: internet gives people more way about what the government does? (UCLA Center for Communications Policy, 2003, p.70)

Beyond civil society, the internet has already demonstrably transformed existing business and commercial models as well as created new ones. Surman and Wershler-Henry (2002) observe that the internet has the potential to return commercial operators back to the 'marketplace', albeit a virtual one, where conversations occur amongst traders, customers and suppliers. The importance of both the network and of conversation in this new trading paradigm is widely supported by others (Evans & Wurster, 2000; Roth, 1998; Schwartz, 1999; Seybold, 1998; Siegel, 1999). The civil society equivalent is the traditional *agora*<sup>14</sup> of Ancient Greece and, just as the internet has transformed commerce, so it offers the potential to change the roles of and relationships between governments and citizens and amongst citizens themselves. Bollier (2002) observes that the internet is a potentially effective tool for the establishment of public commons, arguing that movements such as Free/Libre Open Source Software (FLOSS)<sup>15</sup> demonstrate the potential for citizens to establish themselves online easily and cheaply, although he does seem to ignore the not insignificant barriers to entry that exist. A note of caution is offered here by Kim (2006) who observes that there is no direct correlation between the emergence of community-led online fora and democratic participation. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that the emergence of such fora will of itself re-generate interest in local democracy or civic engagement with formal democratic processes.

<sup>14</sup> An *agora* was the market-place and meeting space within an Ancient Greek city.

<sup>15</sup> Can also be referred to as free open source software (FOSS) or simply as open source software (OSS).

## 2.5 Deliberative Democracy

Public expectations and local politics have changed, requiring more “direct, flexible and ad-hoc methods of participation” that promote dialogue between citizens and their representatives (Council of Europe, 2001, p.1). Habermas (1996) asserts that political rule must be legitimised by the public. If deliberation does not occur then decisions are simply being imposed on citizens (Bohman, 1997).

Representative democracy as a social contract is increasingly one that citizens perceive as entrenched, unchallengeable and not listening. Democracy is a flawed but desirable concept because it is grounded in the trust of citizens. Therefore, it is unrealistic, even undesirable, to replace representative democracy entirely (Line, 2003; Rushkoff, 2003). However, as Rushkoff observes, alternative models can supplement and extend the status quo. Although models of direct democracy are to some degree imperfect because, whilst they theoretically move citizens closer to the processes of government and decision-making, the complexity of the processes can impede citizens’ gaining timely access (Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, 2005). The internet lends itself to the application of deliberative processes emerging not only from within the constructs of existing systems but also from the margins and from within civil society (Chen, 2007; Salter, 2004). Morris (1999) argues that direct democracy is an inevitable consequence of the internet reducing the distance between citizens and their elected representatives and those charged with developing and implementing policy.

Whilst conversation is at the heart of all democracy (Line, 2003), so is access to appropriate and timely information on which to base decision-making (Carnaby & Rao, 2003).

Deliberative democracy encourages participants in a specific process that seeks out difference and disagreement (Witschge, 2002). Those engaged in such a process are receptive to other points of view and willing to amend their own position in light of a persuasive argument; the process is one of open understanding, revision and eventual resolution. Ideas are validated when they are exposed to the scrutiny of others (Wilhelm, 2000).

The deliberative model “places great demands upon citizens’ abilities and willingness to express their own reasons publicly and consider the public reasons of others” (Bohman, 1997, p.322). Concepts of deliberative democracy require a strong, active public sphere, within which open dialogue and debate can occur. Where such rational-critical discourse occurs it creates a space for public opinion to form, through which official decisions can be held democratically accountable (Habermas, 1989, 1996). Dahl (1989) suggests that there are three normative requirements for strong democracy:

- Effective participation;
- Equal opportunity to vote and equal value of each vote; and
- Reaching an enlightened understanding.

Two challenges to this arise in the form of the neo-liberal doctrine. The first challenge is one that privileges the individual over the collective, thereby reducing opportunities for citizens to be engaged, debate and modify their beliefs (Richardson, 1997). The second one revolves around the difficulties involved in reasserting an independent public sphere when it remains colonised by powerful corporate interests, media outlets and technocratic agencies (Wilhelm, 2000).

There can be little doubt that ICT is a key tool in harnessing new and more inclusive methods of participation. There is recognition of the importance of “groups of citizens as key partners in developing and sustaining a culture of participation and as a driving force in the practical application of democratic participation” (Council of Europe, 2001, p.2).

Online democratic interactions often appear diametrically opposed to effective deliberation; online, people seek out those with whom they are likely to agree (Witschge, 2002), causing the “fragmentation of cyber-discourse into mutually exclusive cyber-communities” (Dahlberg, 2001b, p.618). Rather than problematic, Bimber (1998) sees this focussing of personal interests online as accelerating the process of issues-based group formation, which changes the process of political power, if not actually heralding “a new era in democracy” (Bimber, 1998, p.135). Does the internet, therefore, have the potential to reduce the “aversion to difference and disagreement in political conversations” (Witschge, 2002, p.2), thus creating



space for a more deliberative process to occur? Dahlberg (2001b, p.628) raises a further problem when he observes that online fora are dominated “both quantitatively and qualitatively by individuals from the dominant offline culture.” Challenging the inclusiveness and discursive equality of online space, Dahlberg suggests that these spaces more closely replicate Habermas’ (1996) bourgeois public sphere and are then further eroded by the encroachment of commercialisation. A further problem emerges to challenge the universalist assumption of western democracy, namely that of the ideological and technical bias of those engaged in delivering democracy, who tend to develop processes that work in their interests, further reducing opportunities for change if left unchallenged (Bowler, Donovan & Karp, 2002). The internet can help overcome this by supporting democratic spaces to exist outside of more restrictive formal government processes (Rushkoff, 2003), even in societies where democratic debate is strongly controlled or stifled (Kulikova & Perlmutter, 2007; Williamson, 2000). Because the internet does not at present offer significant enhancements to democracy, this does not negate its potential (Witschge, 2002) and, as Sunstein (2001) argues, the internet is at least not bad for democracy. Norris (2002) concurs, pointing to new forms of participatory and deliberative democratic engagement, which parallel developments online.

Witschge (2002) cautions that much of the existing research in this area is problematical and that it is over reliant on quantitative methodologies that artificially and unrealistically attempt to ‘measure’ the internet’s contribution to the public sphere.

## 2.6 Community development

Definitions of ‘community’ are inevitably problematic and the term remains contestable. Sociological definitions of the term began to emerge in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and by the 1950s Hillery (1955) had identified over 96 definitions. Drawing on the work of Willmott (1986, 1989) and others (such as, Crow & Allan, 1994; Gaved & Anderson, 2006), community can be considered to exist in three, potentially overlapping, forms:

**Locality**                      Geographical or place-based community.

<b>Interest</b>	Topical community of those who share common interests.
<b>Attachment</b>	The weakest form of community, suggesting a common sense of identity and a level of interaction with others.

Manion and Bartholomew (2004) view community as a psychological reality, consisting of elements including: Inclusivity; commitment; consensus; realism; contemplation and safety. For Bauman (2000), the term 'community' engenders a feeling of good and belonging, both of which pre-suppose some motivation to belong.

The community and voluntary sector in New Zealand has not been fully quantified. However, research undertaken in 2002 looked at ten voluntary agencies with a diverse range of services, structures and funding sources (New Zealand Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organisations, 2004)<sup>16</sup>. Volunteers made up the equivalent of 402 full time employees (FTE) and paid staff the equivalent of 472 FTE. However, the use of voluntary staff varied widely from only eight percent in one organisation to 94% in another. The voluntary contribution of people was estimated to be worth between NZ\$88 million and NZ\$169 million. These organisations received a further NZ\$9.5 million by way of in-kind donations of goods and services and NZ\$42 million from donations. For every \$1 provided to an agency in the voluntary sector, that agency is able to deliver between \$3-5 worth of services to the community. Whilst this is a useful starting point in identifying the value of voluntary activity, the study's focus on large, formal, national organisations suggests limitations and its attempt to quantify voluntary activity as if it were an item for the balance sheet represents a disturbing trend. Most community activity in New Zealand is locally based and often voluntary because funding does not exist to support it.

Local democracy in New Zealand is based on a philosophy of community participation, enshrined in the Local Government Act 2002. However, such a philosophy stems from recognition that falling rates of voter-participation threatens the legitimacy of the process and that systems of local decision-making "have become detached and distant from

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<sup>16</sup> The organisations in the study were relatively large and operated nationally, whereas most not for profit organisations are small and localised.

communities that they are supposed to serve” (Thompson-Fawcett & Freeman, 2006, p.7). In the UK, Lyons (2007) observes that the role of local government includes community representation, maintaining civic cohesiveness and facilitating debate such that all community voices are heard. However, Lyons observes that active democracy and participation are areas where UK local government has come in for significant public criticism and that there is a general lack of trust amongst the public towards local government.

Following trends seen elsewhere (for example, Putnam, 2000), disaffection with democracy appears to be inversely proportional to educational achievement; 44% of those with no or low qualifications, as reported in the New Zealand Values Study (1998, cited in Dickson, 2004), compared to only 28% of those with tertiary qualifications. Higher income and education levels were also reflected in a greater confidence in civic institutions. Confidence in democratic systems is also ethnically divided, Pākehā being more likely to report having faith in democracy as a political system than Māori (Webster, 2001). There appears little ethnic difference in confidence in Parliament or the system of government, however Māori reported greater confidence (41%) in the public service than Pākehā (25%) and Pākehā reported significantly more confidence in the Police than Māori (84% versus 58%, respectively).

## 2.7 Technology as a Transformative Tool

This chapter has presented a discussion on the historical evolution of democracy and civil society (and with it an overview of key tenets such as social capital and principles of community development). It has drawn links between these historical developments and practices and policy in modern-day New Zealand. It can be seen from the discussion so far that society is not static but that historically it has been renegotiated and reconstituted in various ways and that, globally, there have been distinct emerging phases of democratic change. Increasingly ICT plays a critical role in challenging existing hegemonies such that new models of governance and society can emerge. This next section will present an

argument for the transformational role of technology<sup>17</sup> and then go on to discuss the emerging transformative role of ICT with a particular focus on eDemocracy.

Communications technology has long been seen as both a transformative tool and as a source of power, and, therefore, something to be controlled (Ellul, 1964; Feenberg, 1992, 1999). Pre-dating ICT and the internet, the history of printing, newspapers, radio and television is littered with attempts to impose cultural and political hegemony. It is the power of such media that has consistently led to the challenging of hegemonic assumptions and to attempts to subvert such discourse.

The emergence of the printing press led to an indigenous literature in the US by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there were two-thirds the number of newspapers published in the US compared to England, despite the US at that time having only half the population (Postman, 1986). The trend then was towards the rapid circulation of topical and highly perishable pamphlets and the arrival of printing created a level of equality of access to resources so that knowledge became more widely available (de Tocqueville, 2000). By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century high levels of literacy existed across all classes in the US. As de Tocqueville noted, this emergence of and reliance on printing also impacted on conversational style, which began to mirror the structural form of the printed word. The printing press became more than just a machine; it guided public opinion and led to the formation of distinct discourse communities that crossed boundaries of class and geography (Postman, 1986).

Radio from the 1940s onwards and subsequently, since the 1960s, television have again transformed many aspects of 'Western' society. Politics in particular has been radically transformed by television in comparison to what was familiar in de Tocqueville's time. Rather than the earnest production of pamphlets to position, counter-position and defend a particular political stance, the media of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries has reshaped political commentary into the 30-second 'soundbite', targeted not directly at the public but at

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<sup>17</sup> This discussion relates to technology in its broadest sense but is focussed primarily on information and communications technology.

the television media. As Postman (1986) argues, television is not a technology but a medium. It is not the underlying technology that has positioned television as pivotal to our modern social discourses but the way in which it is used. Television has been and remains the medium through which most citizens in the developed world keep in touch with events at large. However, transforming our societies to become subservient to carefully managed discourses arranged in evenly distributed blocks of time has been at the detriment of a rational public (Hager, 2006). In addition, the passive nature of receiving information via television has created a disconnection for many people between their daily life and the world around them (Mander, 1978).

Once considered as a bridge between the public (and public opinion) and government, today newspaper, radio and television news media often offers little more than “an uneasy compromise between quality and popular news discourses – that represents the worst of both worlds” (Atkinson, 2001, p.317). A reduction in media diversity has occurred alongside a dramatic increase in the management of news, leaving only limited opportunities for citizens to express their own views (Gustafson, 2001). It is clear that attempts to subvert discourses in favour of powerful hegemonies are at work in the news media and that the recipient of news, more than ever before, must be capable of filtering information and effectively locating bias in the stories that are reported. Particularly around election time the media focus is on simplistic polling, with each new poll a headline in its own right such that political reporting becomes “like the sports results, accompanied by spurious and often self-serving theories from commentators” (Hager, 2006, p.262).

Technology (including ICT) is a major source of public power and those who control these systems wield considerable power to control and influence the development of our modern societies (Feenberg, 1992). There are tight controls on existing mass communications media and high barriers to entry for new entrants, such as licensing requirements, equipment costs, acquiring appropriate skills and effective promotion and distribution. The current reality is that the only avenues open to the ordinary citizen to directly address their fellow citizens through traditional media are ‘talk-back’ radio and ‘Letters to the Editor’ in the print media. The advent of reality TV may in fact be TV’s response to increasing interest by society ‘to be

involved'. Many commentators argue that the advent of the internet changes this lack of opportunity for citizen involvement, making publication and promotion of a diverse range of minority and alternative viewpoints relatively straightforward and low-cost (Castells, 2001; Habermas, 2006; Rheingold, 1994, 2002). The internet has fragmented and decentralised the context in which communication occurs and so-called 'experts' must now compete with unedited egalitarian sources of information and internet 'blogs' are a pertinent example of such emerging processes (Kulikova & Perlmutter, 2007; Ng, 2007). Online spaces have led to a weakening of the power of traditional media to control information and shifted attention, "allowing citizens to concentrate on the same critically filtered issues and journalistic pieces at any given time" (Habermas, 2006, p.4).

### **2.7.1 Moving Communities Online**

It has been recognised for over 40 years that information and communication are at the core of human understanding of social and political action. The rapid development of new technology-based tools of knowledge generation and information processing have major implications and that society is being fundamentally changed where it is exposed to such technology (Ellul, 1964; Feenberg, 1999; Habermas, 1979, 1987a, 1987b; Postman, 1986, 1992). Whilst ICT does not of itself determine social process, it can be seen as "a mediating factor in the complex matrix of interaction between social structures, social actors and their socially constructed tools" (Castells, 1999, p.1). The relatively un-regulated and anarchic nature of the internet creates a virtual space that offers the potential to develop social movements and be developed in ways that are appropriate to the needs of such movements. Bollier (2002) sees the internet's potential as an effective tool for the establishment of public commons where citizens can establish themselves online relatively easily and cheaply.

Internet 'blogs' demonstrate a fashionable and low cost method of opinion sharing and publishing (Williamson & DeSouza, 2007). Whilst they are mostly associated with individuals rather than being used to promote or sustain community, there are local

examples of blogs being used to challenge the technocracy of government agencies<sup>18</sup>. There are also many examples of online activists and radicals appearing to promote democracy and participation in democratic process. Yet in reality caution is often needed as the blog authors tend to be white, middle class and male, doing little more than promoting their own flawed utopian ideals for their own purposes (Sobchack, 1996; Williamson & DeSouza, 2007).

An internet-based environment that supports community-led grass-roots change must encompass the development of localised solutions, where the experiences and aspirations of the community can be harnessed to create an environment of empowerment and learning (Day, 2004b). Literacy is a critical element in individual and community empowerment (Freire, 1972, 1974) and, as Okri (1997, p.60) observes, writing is itself a form of resistance, arguing “writers are dangerous when they tell the truth. Writers are also dangerous when they tell lies.” Language and culture are key elements and the online environment is immersed in the culture of the community that it serves (Castells, 1999). The internet has the potential to build bonds that transcend the virtual and develop in the physical world. Castells (1999) argues that sociability on the internet is both weak and strong, depending on the people, content and relationships. He argues that the electronic world does not exist in a vacuum and that it requires some reference to the physical and the social worlds of its participants. Although Glogoff (2001), Rheingold (1994) and Castells (1999) observe that the internet can enhance community by removing boundaries of space and time, Glogoff (2001) cautions that communication richness is directly related to the richness of the medium. Online communication appears less rich than face-to-face communication and to be less personal, trusting or friendly.

Despite the liberating potential of ICT, dominant hegemonies persist and Castells (1999) sees traditional sources of exclusion being duplicated online. Attempts are being made to control the flow of information such that “the internet is in danger of becoming yet another instrument of cultural and political hegemony” (Ni hEilidhe, 1998, p.1). Despite (or perhaps because) the internet is already the largest public commons, serious attempts are being made

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<sup>18</sup> For example, ‘cyfswatch.blogspot.com’, which was established by victims of perceived abuses of power by social workers within the Child, Youth and Family service of the Ministry of Social Development and which

to manage, control and own both the networks and the flow of information (Bollier, 2002). Millward (2003) and Norris (2001) agree, observing that deprivation of access to ICT results in a failure to become technologically literate and further marginalises citizens. Lack of access to ICT compounds traditional barriers to academic achievement (Huang & Russell, 2006) and to democratic participation (Norris, 2001). Being marginalized in one area of life increases the likelihood that an individual will become marginalized in other areas (Calhoun, 1998). Those who are already marginalized for other reasons, such as those identified above, are becoming even more marginalised because they are unable to access the new technologies available to the wealthier or more educated communities (Worcman, 2002).

## 2.7.2 Adoption of ICT

Lack of access to ICT creates a further level of information disparity that in turn has the potential to exclude and marginalise citizens from social, cultural or economic activities. Increasingly, failure to acquire basic ICT literacy skills reduces an individual's ability to gain employment and to participate in society (Facer & Furlong, 2001; Servon, 2002).

Recognition must be made of the perception of the value and purpose of ICT; is it valued for entertainment rather than education or connectivity? In the UK there is evidence of a direct correlation between video game console ownership and low-income which is not apparent for computer ownership. Research in Finland suggests that consumption patterns for ICT is similar to those of books and magazines and that, like books, the adoption of ICT "attracts a higher social status" (Rasanen, 2006, p.13). Zhu, Taylor, Marshall and Dekkers (2003) observe that, in considering the adoption of ICT, consideration must be given to the micro-level motivators, both societal and personal. They suggest that individuals need to first be aware of and then motivated to want to use ICT and, subsequently, that individuals and groups are able to identify value in its ongoing use.

Adoption, defined by Rogers (2003, p.177) as "a decision to make full use of innovation", is based on perception of the value and attributes of technology, therefore, the discontinuity of

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the Ministry attempted to shut-down.



change caused by the adoption of ICT can itself act as a barrier to uptake and ubiquity (Moore, 1999). Adoption of ICT is influenced by the impact and complementarity of strategic and other organisational factors, which can raise or lower the profile and perceived relevance of ICT (Bocquet, Brossard & Sabatier, 2007). Within households, research suggests that those with children are more likely to use the internet (and use it more) than those without (Katz & Rice, 2002). However, the role of children in family adoption of ICT appears more symbolic than practical and is most often used as “an official justification for buying/adopting a computer rather than as a strong and sustained guiding force” (Selwyn, 2004, p.16).

Facer and Furlong (2001) suggest that poverty is not always the reason for not owning a computer at home and that other family priorities can take precedence over the decision for computer ownership. In such instances activities, such as food, clothing, transport or sport can be more highly valued than home based access to ICT. Whilst this trend is seen in some UK migrant communities in New Zealand, other migrants are equally likely to have above average adoption rates in order to maintain transnational networks, which is the case in New Zealand (Ministry of Social Development, 2006).

## 2.8 Electronic Governance, Government and Democracy

The internet is a demonstrably powerful tool for connecting people to information, with each other and, as Schuler (2000) observes, it provides tools for strong democracy, including email, online forums and online access to reference documents. Just as the relative neutrality of the internet has proved beneficial in the commercial sector, it also creates opportunities for new forms of community and democratic connectedness (O’Loughlin, 2001). ICT affects democracy both indirectly and directly. Indirectly, it can be harnessed as a tool to transform the wider social and economic landscapes, yet it is also a direct and “essential (but only partial) tool in facilitating democratic government and its supporting administrative functions and institutions” (Chen, Gibson & Geiselhart, 2006, p.2). Like all media, ICT can be valuable when harnessed for directly communicating a message. Yet it provides an interactive experience, where the views of many can be expressed and potentially disseminated widely, lowering the barrier to political self-expression (Chen, Gibson &

Geiselhart, 2006). ICT is unlike traditional print and electronic media because it offers citizens the opportunity to become more involved in the political and democratic process. In consideration of the foregoing, this next section will explore definitions of eDemocracy across a continuum from government-centric to citizen-centric in an attempt to contextualise the term for local government.

Riley (2003, p.55) observes that there are “as many interpretations of what constitutes e-democracy as there are interpretations of democracy.” eDemocracy is an emerging field and Coleman (2004b) suggests that it is (and should remain) a contestable discourse. The use of the word ‘democracy’ is itself fraught with problems. It is a “term that we throw around as if we all understand it and agree about it” but ‘democracy’ cannot “be regarded as having a coherent and substantive meaning when it is so often appropriated by the self-serving rhetorics’ [sic] of corporate, imperial and other exclusive interests?” (S. Coleman, 2004b, p.1). Coleman is rightly wary of the current fetish for the prefixing of an ‘e’ in front of familiar words in order to render new electronic metaphors. He warns that “when we combine such pliable and hybrid buzzwords and get *eDemocracy*, can we expect this to be a term that illuminates more than it hides?” (p.1).

Many discussions of eDemocracy retain representative and technocratic government processes at the centre, whilst acknowledging that significant opportunity lies in Democracy’s ability to more directly engage citizens (Chen, 2007). Indeed, Coleman criticises what he calls the “simplistic connection between eDemocracy and direct, plebiscitary democracy” (S. Coleman, 2004a, p.2). Kakabadse, Kakabadse and Kouzmin (2007) caution that the emergence of new forms of civic activism and the increasing corporatisation of the media means that attempts to fit eDemocracy within current models of democracy are unlikely to be successful. This section will critique key definitions of eDemocracy and draws on literature to present alternative approaches to eDemocracy that offer the potential for more citizen-focussed debate and for the creation of fora beyond the political centre, acknowledging that the use of the internet for democratic purposes can itself be exclusionary

(Malina & Macintosh, 2004). For the purpose of this discussion, traditional approaches to eDemocracy can be represented as diagrammatically shown in Figure 5<sup>19</sup>.

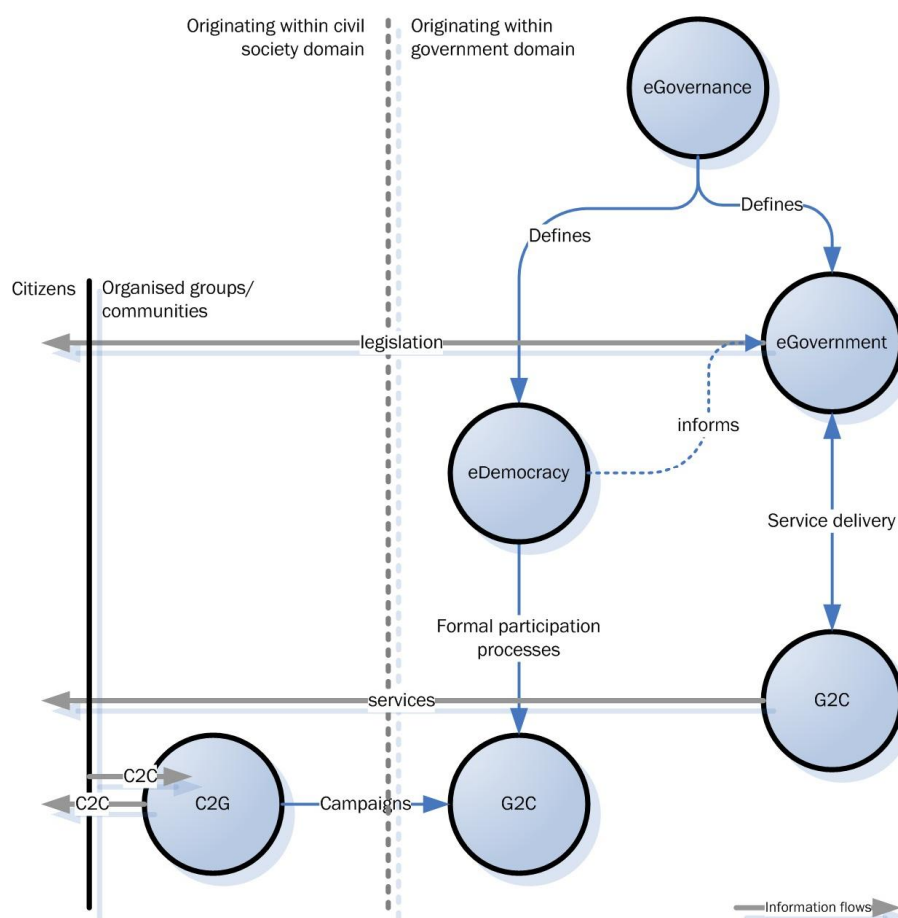


Figure 5: Situating of eDemocracy within a Government-centric context.

Whilst the rhetoric of government<sup>20</sup> values engaged citizens and governments feel the need to solicit “feedback in order to develop good policy and services at all levels” (Office of the e-Envoy, 2001, p.1), citizen involvement should not be assumed. Ranerup (2000) observes that whilst online fora can be initiated by a range of actors, citizens are not necessarily consulted over the establishment and design, despite being key stakeholders. Holman and McGregor (2005) observe that policy-makers must embrace the concept of the internet as a public commons, shifting away from the entrenched mindset of government-centric information delivery and a corporatized mass-media. A gap emerges between the technocracy of public

<sup>19</sup> G2C = Government to Citizen; C2G = Citizen to Government

administration and the desire of those citizens interested in democratisation and the revival of representative bodies (Chadwick, 2003). In the UK this gap is further exacerbated, Lyons (2007, p.6) argues, by “central and local government frameworks that focus solely on service improvements” rather than on the needs of citizens. Bimber notes that the term ‘citizen’ is problematic in a system of governance that privileges technocratic and power elites (2004).

Wright (2006) argues that views expressed on the future impact of eDemocracy can generally be divided into three categories, namely that the internet will:

- revolutionise democratic systems and that such views are normally technologically deterministic;
- re-invigorate representative democracy by developing technical fixes to alleviate the problems; or
- become normalised through the political process, thereby reducing its impact.

However, these views are somewhat government-centric and ignore the potential for a fourth socially-determined model of transformation based on the will and motivation of citizens. As Chen (2007) observes, a citizen-centric approach allows participants to define the process and manage the delivery and outcomes, creating stronger ties to democratic practice. Wright’s (2006) argument assumes that that the facilitation of eDemocracy will be controlled by the political institutions. Therefore, he argues, a perception problem exists since it is not about technology but a case of restoring trust in government to operate in the best interests of citizens. Norris (2001) suggests that, in the first instance, governments must intervene through policies that increase access to ICT and Needham (2004, p.47) notes that government leadership is required because:

The extent to which technology will be democratising in its potential will depend in large part on the willingness of governments to act as leader and facilitator of expanded democratic participation.

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<sup>20</sup> In this context the term ‘government’ is used in a broad sense to include both the policy and administrative

Just as reinventing poorly functioning traditional processes in an online environment will result in a poorly functioning online process (Riley, 2003), attempting to define eDemocracy within a traditional paradigm presents problems. Many current definitions appear inadequate, placing too much emphasis on the role of government or the importance of the technology. For example, one of the most widely cited definitions of eDemocracy defines the term as representing the use of ICT:

...by democratic actors (governments, elected officials, the media, political organizations, citizen/voters) within political and governance processes of local communities, nations and on the international stage. To many, e-democracy suggests greater and more active citizen participation enabled by the internet, mobile communications, and other technologies in today's representative democracy as well as through more participatory or direct forms of citizen involvement in addressing public challenges (Clift, 2002, p.1).

Although constructive, this definition does not challenge hegemonic assumptions about power, exclusion or the processes of governance, government or democracy. It simply locates ICT within the status quo, perpetuating a view that democratic participation and government is still to be based on traditional representative systems, where a quantitative measure of votes cast (or perhaps of the way votes are cast) is sufficient. Yet, this is insufficient if we are now at a stage where "citizens are feeling a loss of ownership in the democratic process" (Malina & Macintosh, 2004, p.267).

Riley (2003) contends that eDemocracy is most often viewed as a subset of an eGovernance framework and is simply focussed on "how citizens interact with government or influence legislative or public sector process" (p.3). eDemocracy is often seen in government circles as little more than a way of privileging communication between citizens and a system of government that remains unchallenged, aligning with a traditional definition of democracy espoused by King and Schneider (1991). Such definitions are insufficient in that they perpetuate "the 'command and control' process whereby government decides what they think the citizen wants" (Riley, p.4). Whilst eDemocracy has the potential to widen

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aspects of government.

participation in democracy (Chen, Gibson & Geiselhart, 2006), it all too often remains an attempt to streamline existing communication channels, focussing on what Dahl (1989) refers to as the enlightened understanding of citizens and rarely transcending existing boundaries of power to provide for effective participation.

The potential of ICT seems to lie not in the destruction of current democratic, parliamentary or legislative processes but in its ability to support a reinvention of these processes based on new participatory contexts (Rushkoff, 2003). As Florida puts it:

The old forms don't work, because they no longer fit the people we've become (Florida, 2002, p.xii).

Can democracy be extended beyond the traditional narrow borders of the political sphere to include discourses that take place within communities, thereby enhancing the deliberative aspects of democracy further? Miller (1993) suggests that deliberative democracy can be strengthened by the existence of alternative fora supporting different discourses, thereby raising the possibility for an eDemocracy model that is formed outside of government, that does not contradict an extension of the representative models discussed above but which offers additional channels for citizens to engage through. Such a model of an engaged, consulted civil society blurs the traditional separation between public and private, government and citizen. Some, such as Surman and Wershler-Henry (2002), go further, arguing that governments have no place in defining a virtual civil society and that it should be left to citizens to form, structure and populate these new spaces. The true potential of what they describe as 'commonsense' lies in the hundreds even thousands of micro-projects and single issue campaigns that draw small numbers of individuals together from time to time, not in the macro level issues of national policy. Dahlberg (2000) concurs when describing online deliberative discussion forums, noting the necessity for discourse to be based on the concerns of the public and not be driven or manipulated by bureaucratic or administrative agendas. However, this ignores the issues of co-ordination, the most efficient use of what is often scarce volunteer labour (Williamson, 2003), the economies of scale that can be gained from a cooperative framework and the overarching need for infrastructure

projects (such as broadband access and information literacy) that are required for individual projects to be effective.

eDemocracy can be viewed as “true citizen empowerment” (Riley, 2003, p.5) where online services provide “not only answers but would engage the citizen in the determination of what questions are to be asked and who decides the issues” (p.5). Whilst this leads towards a more deliberative model in which opinions can be developed through the critical analysis of evidence and debate, it still assumes existing structures and processes as its starting point, uncritically imposing a Westminster-style democracy.

Blumler and Coleman (2001) observe that public disquiet with government and political practices in the UK allows the internet to be seen as a place to build a new electronic commons. In this online landscape new forms of political and civic involvement can be fostered with ICT at the heart of government and democracy.

The foregoing suggests that the deliberative capacity of democracy can – in claim at least – re-engage citizens. There is evidence that the internet has certainly had an effect on revitalizing some aspects of deliberative democracy (S. Coleman, 2004a, 2004b; S. Coleman & Gøtze, 2002; Salter, 2004), which involves a discourse community where preferences and beliefs can be presented, scrutinized and changed following a more persuasive argument (Dryzek & List, 2003). However, “online consultations are not, and will not become, a panacea for disconnection between politicians and citizens” (S. Coleman, 2004a, p.20) and “floods of emails from citizens acting without lasting convictions about public problems or lasting interests do not add to the democratic discourse” (Bimber, 1999, p.425). The very open and accessible nature of the internet itself possesses a problem in that it encourages practices that are non-deliberative in nature, such as personal attacks and ‘flaming’ (Chen, Gibson & Geiselhart, 2006).

Perhaps eDemocracy is little more than a placebo to fulfil an immediate desire to be heard on the part of frustrated citizens and, on the part of governments, a release valve for voter frustration?

Cyberprotest is to politics what cyberporn is to real sex. There is the niggling need for self-expression, the moment of urgent communication with a computer screen, all leading to a vague sense of foolishness and anti-climax... The process has provided the illusion of engagement for those who prefer to sit at their desks and will doubtless become a part of our political lives (Blacker, 2007, p.1).

Given the preponderance of definitions that simply restate the status quo with the inclusion of ICT, the challenge would appear to be how to perpetuate contestability so that citizens (and governments) can produce innovative solutions that can challenge power discourses and hegemonies, particularly technocratic and government-centric views of democracy. It is important, Chen, Gibson and Geiselhart (2006, p.10) argue, to recognise that both democratic and autocratic forces “co-exist in a complex relationship that remains ongoing and provides the landscape of political action.”

The internet has allowed solutions to emerge from the edges, developed by citizens for citizens. These solutions are as important as more formalised methods of communication in creating a true dialogue between citizens and governments (and vice versa). eDemocracy is a two-way process. It can be used as a conduit for governments to engage with citizens and for citizens to create and operate systems and processes that hold governments to account. The information age not only strongly supports discussion and interaction, it requires them. It is both an individual media and a collective phenomena, creating an environment that supports distributed models of democracy that are built on strong relationships and which permit feedback loops within the policy development process (Rushkoff, 2003). Like television, the internet's value is as a medium, not as a technology. Indeed some go further arguing that the internet is better perceived as a 'space', albeit a virtual one, that goes beyond a simple medium of transmission (Kearns, 2002). For Feenberg (1999), democratic choice is not about technical or economic efficiencies; rather it depends on a perceived fit with the interests and beliefs of the societal groups influencing the design process and their relationship to the social environment.



eDemocracy exists within a contextual framework of eGovernance that allows for two possible models of democratic participation. The first is a form of electronic representation based on traditional government-centric consultation models for obtaining input into a representative decision-making process. The second involves citizen-initiated discourses that offer transformative potential based on concepts of partnership (governments working with citizens). In demonstrating this synthesis diagrammatically, the model shown in Figure 6 below extends what was described earlier in Figure 5 to include actors and networks that originate in the civil society sphere and which engage with democratic institutions (and other community actors):

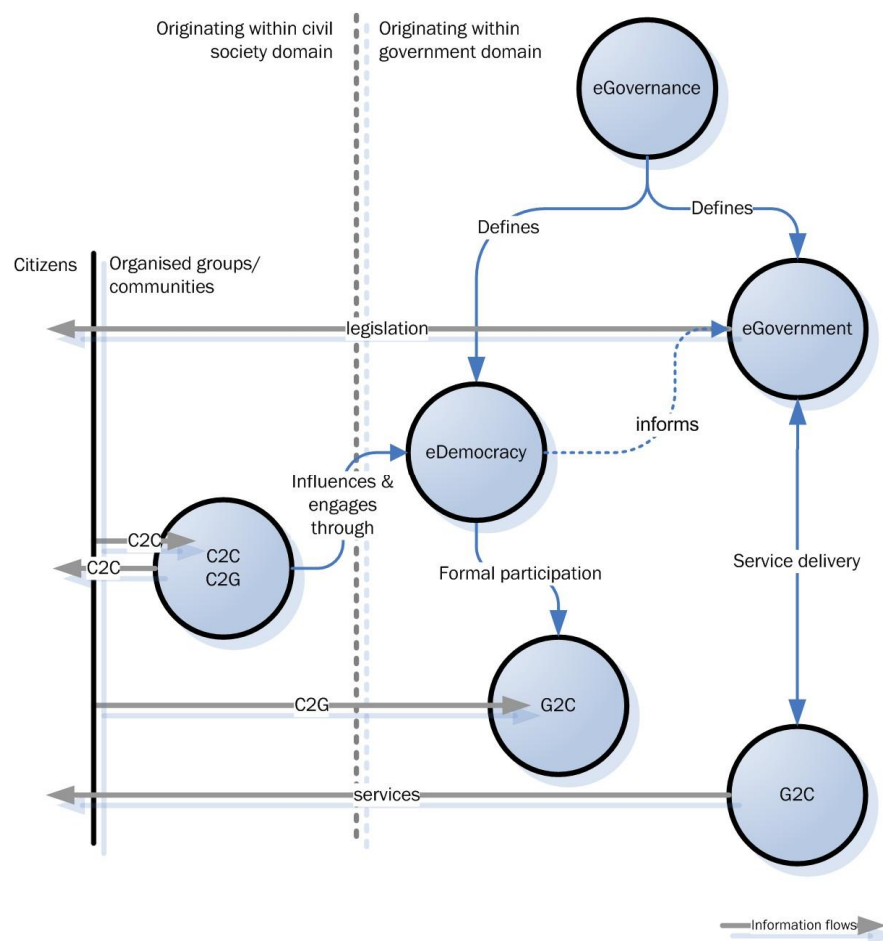


Figure 6: Situating of eDemocracy within a Citizen-centric context.

Definitions of eDemocracy provide a context for an eDemocracy framework that can be more or less citizen focussed. At one extreme existing democratic process is internet-enabled with no regard to democratic engagement or increased participation. At the other, citizens become

the creators and owners of new tools of engagement and the potential exists to re-engage citizens, shifting power away from the technocratic elites and back to the community.

These key attributes of the model can be defined as follows:

- eGovernance** A policy-level vision or framework that articulates the key strategic requirements for the adoption of ICT and the internet within a context of democracy and government. eGovernance is how the political and social power within systems are organised and used online.
- eGovernment** The provision of information, transactions and services between government agencies and from government to citizens and businesses. eGovernment encapsulates the electronic delivery of government 'business' from the centre out (governments 'doing to' citizens).
- eDemocracy** The electronic process through which citizens engage with government and its agents (and vice versa), including consultation and voting. eDemocracy is a two-way process that can be driven by either government or citizens.
- Government-led eDemocracy** Top down, change process: Governments creating points of electronic interface in order to consult or capture opinion from citizens. Most often a change process, it is a new way of re-creating existing communication and consultation models, for example consultation on policy issues or planning processes and clinics with politicians.
- Citizen-led eDemocracy** Bottom-up, transformative process: Citizens create and sustain ICT-based solutions, including email lists, discussion boards, chat, blogs and websites, that accurately capture and reflect civic discourses. Such fora can be vertical (subject-based) or horizontal (geographical) and able to influence government actions either directly (through shared

involvement) or indirectly (through public, media or political influence). Citizen-led eDemocracy involves governments 'working with' citizens.

The literature discussed above highlights many opportunities for citizen initiated and maintained discursive democratic spaces to emerge. The internet has often been seen as being on the fringe of traditional discourses, able to be used in order to challenge hegemonic assumptions. However, models for electronic democracy focus strongly on their integration within existing representative structures (even when they are proposing a more participatory process). There appears to be little research literature that describes the potential to extend the parameters of eDemocracy to include the additional focus on citizen-led eDemocracy. However, opportunities clearly exist to develop participatory models not on the fringes but at the core of the participatory process especially as, in New Zealand at least, the Local Government Act 2002 emphasises the importance of community participation.

This research is concerned with how citizens engage with democracy and not with the technology used, other than noting the importance of universal access and appropriate infrastructure. As Chen (2007) observes, one of the pitfalls of any eDemocracy programme is over-emphasis on the technological aspects which, whilst, important to the delivery of democracy, are incidental to the democratic act itself.

## 2.9 Community Informatics

The remainder of this chapter will contextualise the use of ICT within community settings by providing a definition of CI and then by describing CI research and activities. CI as a field of both research and practice is well defined. Various normative statements provide accepted definitions, such as Gurstein (2000), who states that CI is about "how ICT can help achieve a community's social, economic or cultural goals" (p.3), and Taylor (2004), who suggests that it is "the application of ICT for local community benefit" (p.2). Loader and Keeble (2004) argue that CI is a distinctive research agenda because it privileges *information* and *communication* ahead of the *technology* and because it "emphasises a grassroots perspective whereby

community members are centrally involved in the application of ICT for community development” (p.4). The emergent and grassroots nature of CI means that its definition will most likely remain contestable such that it can be aligned appropriately with the goals of those that continue to use it.

The primary aim of most CI initiatives is to ensure the effective use of ICT, which Gurstein (2003, p.9) defines as “the capacity and opportunity to successfully integrate ICT into the accomplishment of self or collaboratively identified goals.” Determinants of effectiveness are more than technological and both the cultural and political environments must also be considered in determining the effectiveness of any initiative (Mälkiä, Anttiroiko, & Savolainen, 2004). As discussed above, democratic choice is not dependent on technical or economic efficiencies but on the perceived interests and beliefs of stakeholders (Feenberg, 1999). Whilst the inherent architecture of the internet lends itself to more deliberative, grassroots and distributed models, this is itself shaped by the way in which it is used (Salter, 2004).

CI encompasses an implicit shift away from an acceptance of the essentialising technocratic top-down approach, recognising that solutions can and do emerge from within a community. Solutions are owned by the community, privileging local needs and aspirations (Marshall & Taylor, 2004; Schuler & Day, 2004) and therefore, locally negotiated definitions of such initiatives are required. These definitions provide an appropriate discipline for both the development of and research into the use of ICT within democratic processes, particularly where the project is grounded in citizen-based models of eDemocracy.

Whilst CI is itself a recently emerging field, it draws heavily on the community networking movement originating in the US and the emergence in the 1980s of the *telehouse* model in Scandinavia (Agre & Schuler, 1992; Cronberg, Duelund, Jensen, & Qvortrup, 1991; Qvortrup, 1984, 1987). Today, CI encompasses the use of ICT in “community development, economic regeneration, democratic renewal and social support” (Loader & Keeble, 2004, p.1). Loader and Keeble see that, as well as the grassroots nature of ICT, CI’s contribution as a research discipline is that it seeks to “provide a multi-disciplinary research platform to undertake

rigorous and critical analysis” (p.4) so that understanding can be developed and that the results of such research are able to inform policy-makers and practitioners.

## 2.9.1 Phased Maturity

CI initiatives do not exist within a vacuum, their use in community settings is influenced by the nature and extent of that community. Day (2004b) identifies three components of CI as policy, partnerships and practice (3Ps). He then goes on to expand on these macro components with a framework for the democratic design of CI initiatives, which asserts that communities need to be empowered before they can campaign for their own interests and influence community policy. The framework aims to create a “democratic community planning agenda” (Day, 2004b, p.33) by defining the critical criteria for success and sustainability and is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Framework for the democratic design of ICT initiatives (Day, 2004b)

Toward Democratic Community	<p>Seek initiatives that embrace community values; solidarity, participation and coherence.</p> <p>Promote community development through the empowerment of citizens to define their own needs.</p> <p>Relate goals and outcomes to the needs of communities and citizens.</p> <p>Develop activities and services that meet community need identified through sustained and meaningful dialogue between citizens and service providers.</p> <p>Give priority to the needs and interests of a community's socially excluded citizens.</p>
Toward Democratic Politics	<p>Avoid policies that establish authoritarian or elitist social relations.</p> <p>Ensure initiative and independence to encourage participatory community action to achieve goals.</p> <p>Contribute to public space for shared communications that facilitate inter/intra-community conviviality.</p> <p>Recognize and celebrate diversity of opinions and beliefs, values and cultures and avoid policies that promote intolerance and disrespect.</p>
Toward Democratic Work	<p>Promote self-actualization through activities and services that stimulate lifelong learning and active citizenship.</p> <p>Invest in social capital by promoting common community interests and concerns.</p> <p>Seek to stimulate both social and formal economies of local communities.</p>
Securing Democratic Sustainability	<p>Enable meaningful engagement with groups and organisations active within local communities through the development of tripartite partnerships.</p> <p>Promote social innovation by harnessing the indigenous knowledge and creativity of communities with the resources and expertise of public, private and third sectors.</p> <p>Develop a sense of community identity and ownership (essential to sustainability)</p>
Embracing Community Participation	<p>Promote universal participation.</p> <p>Seek 'local' technological flexibility and 'global' technological pluralism.</p>

## 2.9.2 Project versus Process

Whilst not a problem unique to CI, it is important to clarify the difference between a project and an ongoing and sustainable (operationalized) process. In this chapter, the term 'community informatics initiative' has been used to represent a community ICT project, process or model, regardless of its current position in a project or systems lifecycle. This is intentional since, as Day (2004a) observes, focusing solely on projects is problematic as this fails to recognise that, to succeed, projects must become operationalized and, therefore, sustainable. Projects are inherently unique, temporal and require specific resources to complete (Schwalbe, 2000), allowing them to be easily defined (and containerised) by funding agencies and policy-makers. An operationalized CI initiative, on the other hand, is ongoing (although not necessarily permanent) and closely aligned with an organisation's 'business as usual' processes. A policy and funding focus on the perishable project makes sustainable initiatives more difficult to achieve.

## 2.9.3 Community Informatics Initiatives

There are numerous examples of CI initiatives that attempt to build community capacity, provide education, skills, networking and resources for communities and which attempt to bridge the divide between communities with access to ICT and those without. The publicly-funded provision of community ICT facilities is now a well established model in the developed world (Selwyn, 2004). Gaved and Anderson (2006) suggest that local CI initiatives consist of one or more of the following characteristics:

- Infrastructure (such as network and assets);
- Digital content;
- Training and sharing of skills;
- Support; and
- Physical location.

The US cities of Austin, Pittsburgh and Seattle have taken a proactive stance regarding the provision of access, support and training for ICT within their communities. Not an altruistic effort, this has occurred because those cities see the information economy as an important

part their future. However, despite local government support, all three cities report barriers to success that include funding, over-demand (or under supply) of facilities and sustainable support. A significant critical success factor in all three projects is community involvement and the buy-in and re-invigorating of local communities is seen as an important factor (Servon & Nelson, 2001). The three projects that Servon and Nelson refer to all provide access to ICT through existing public facilities – libraries, internet cafes or government agencies. Such a model is widely utilised as a way to provide access to disadvantaged communities and is mirrored to different degrees across the world, ranging from the nationwide library-based People’s Network in the UK<sup>21</sup> to local library projects in New Zealand and other initiatives in the community such as Smart Newtown or attempts by the UK ICT Consortium to co-locate ICT facilities with other community facilities, such as neighbourhood law offices and health clinics. Each of these projects attempts to increase access by providing public access in local facilities that are available to all who wish to use them.

It has been well established that individuals benefit by engaging in the discourses of their community in that learning occurs through contribution and the situated negotiation and re-negotiation of meaning (Dewey, 1998). CI initiatives often support this aim, promoting outcomes where learning can occur at a community as well as an individual level and this aligns with wider strategies for lifelong learning (Kvasny, Kranich, & Schement, 2006). Pigg and Crank (2003) observe that a community’s capacity to self-organise is limited unless there is open access to information (and for this to occur, access to ICT is required). Within communities, leadership is critical since ICT is like any other community project, requiring leadership, and momentum so that the community can work collectively towards improving capacity through engagement. Rural initiatives often have similar objectives to their urban counterparts, the aim is most often to improve access, raise ICT literacy skills and provide improved social infrastructure and opportunities for economic development (Pigg & Crank, 2003).

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<sup>21</sup> The draft New Zealand Digital Content Strategy contains a proposal for a localised version of the People’s Network to be based in public libraries and Citizens Advice Bureaux. Phase 1 of this project was subsequently funded through the Digital Strategy’s Community Partnerships (CPF) fund.

Using ICT to build community-level linkages can promote increased connectivity as a way of strengthening social capital. A lack of access to information and information networks has been identified as a contributing factor to the fragmentation of communities and to falling levels of community engagement (Foth & Adkins, 2006; Quan-Haase & Wellman, 2004). ICT and the internet in particular are identified as tools to reverse this trend and to provide tools and information to communities (Pease, Wright, & Cooper, 2003). Such ICT-based community networks can lead to the development and maintenance of strong, intermediate and weak network ties that are able to provide support and information across both broad and specific relationships within a community (Wellman, 1996). This is supported by activities in Byron Bay, NSW, where the focus has been on creating community-oriented organisational 'communities of practice' through the integration of online and offline networks (Ardron & Nicholls, 2003). For this to occur, existing community networks must already exist. However, despite the promise of community involvement, cohesion and empowerment offered by local community networks using ICT, there is little evidence that communities in regional Australia have been able to sustain community networks that can demonstrate increased social, cultural or self-reliance capital (Taylor & Marshall, 2002).

Community technology projects are invariably under-resourced and reliant on volunteer labour and goodwill to be sustainable, particularly during the early establishment stages (Day, 2004a; Williamson, 2003). Hence, communities need to consider what happens when the project matures and requires ongoing commitments. Inherent in such assessment is valuing the worth of such projects and their processes as a community resource.

Unfortunately, research into CI initiatives suggests that sustainability is often at risk because of a focus by funding agencies on short-term project-based funding (Day, 2004b; Williamson, 2005). Such a short-term focus has implications for effective strategic planning, effective community change as well as for the sustainability of these efforts.

Examples abound but as a small case study to reinforce this point, a community technology centre based on student volunteers was developed to engage youth in the central-Sydney suburb of Redfern-Waterloo. Its major aim was to bridge the digital divide and the cultural divide between youth and the wider community. The project faced ongoing issues in



maintaining links to the wider community and in supporting older youths to engage beyond the Centre, particularly since ICT was often inaccessible in that particular community. Hence, the project suffered from major sustainability issues around funding and was heavily reliant on volunteers and donations thus severely limiting the chance of success (Solomon, Rodrigo, & Sengara, 2003).

For Smith, Cambridge and Gush (2003), technology literacy and lack of confidence was addressed through free, publicly funded internet access kiosks. These 'digital doorway' projects in an under-developed South African township demonstrate scalability by adopting concepts developed in India and involve an internet-enabled Personal Computer (PC) placed in a public area. This and other examples note that there was a major issue of confidence to be overcome even before training could be commenced. However, the approach recognised that by simply providing free and available access, people would start using the PC themselves and, as was demonstrated, many will quickly gain enough skills and confidence to be able to operate it. Such approaches reinforce the demonstrable success of the 'Hole in the Wall' project in Hyderabad, India conducted by (Mitra, 2007).

It can often be difficult to assess whether such projects are successful or even sustainable and whether existing models can be successfully leveraged for use in other locales. There is a distinct lack of detailed empirical research into the effects of CI initiatives and, where it does exist, there is a tendency for the research to be conducted over short time periods that suit individual post graduate research projects or within elected parliamentary cycles. It has been suggested that this is "in part because it was assumed that their effects would be positive" (Gaved & Anderson, 2006, p.4). CI initiatives, as many demonstrably improve quality of life indicators, however, it suggests case is needed to avoid a 'one-size-fits-all' approach that focuses on the provision of public ICT centres rather than on the needs of local communities. There are in fact signs emerging that the concept of 'universal access' based solely on public ICT facilities is limited (reference needed). Whilst there is increasing activity by non-government organizations to address develop online content targeting socially disadvantaged groups, these strategies go only some of the way towards to increasing the take-up of public ICT provision. Public ICT facilities are "useful for those that use them [but]

appears likely that such sites will only ever fulfil a limited social role and are certainly not a panacea to the perceived inequalities of the information age" (Selwyn, 2004, p.16).

Research indicates that CI initiatives tend to be over-reliant on goodwill and voluntary resources and, because of this, their existence can be perilous (B. Craig & Williamson, 2005a; Day, 2004a). The tenuous nature of CI is certainly evident in New Zealand and a primary issue identified in research into CI projects there (Williamson, 2005), which identified four key themes:

- Limitations of funding and over-reliance on voluntary resource;
- Equitable access to ICT;
- Lack of strategic planning skills; and
- The role of partnerships in sustaining initiatives.

These findings are supported by research into how effectively US-based non-profits use and integrate technology into their organisations. They also observe that the key predictors for success with ICT were in having experienced technical staff and managerial enthusiasm for what ICT can achieve (Dederich, Hausman, & Maxwell, 2006). Research in the UK also highlights similar barriers to effective use, including a lack of understanding, poor planning and management, failing to see the relevance or value, prohibitive costs, mistrust of technology and poor use of technologies within organisations (Henderson, 2006).

The policy and practice background for CI initiatives in New Zealand was discussed in Chapter 1 by way of providing a context for this research. My previous research also describes the internet's potential as a tool for community activism and for enhancing participation in local government through a narrative case study based on the evolution of community websites in Waitakere City (Williamson, 2003). It demonstrated how some CI initiatives that have a strong grass-roots community representation/democracy focus have emerged.

These experiences show that communities are able to publish cheaply and easily online, provided that they have the access and skills to do so. However, promotion of the online site

and awareness-building through both online and traditional methods was also found to be critical to success. Local websites can become a conduit for local stories (presenting alternative views to traditional media and even informing local media). However, such projects often suffer from a lack of professionalism due to a heavy reliance on volunteers and are not sustainable (due to both people and technology). Small communities lacked the economies of scale to manage and sustain key projects around the effective use of ICT (Williamson, 2003). Despite this “community groups in Waitakere City have managed to ‘punch above their weight’ by working together, both on a personal level and online” (p.154) and the research concluded that:

<b>Low-budget does not mean low-technology</b>	Communities can publish cheaply and easily. However, promotion of the site and awareness-building through both online and traditional methods is critical.
<b>‘Your view does count’</b>	Websites proved to be a key strategic resource for communities and it was possible to use the internet to strongly promote a localised discourse and a community position.
<b>Good practice is important</b>	Applying commercial skills and ‘good practice’ to the design and management of community technology assets ensured a professional and usable product.
<b>Succession plans are required</b>	The succession from the ‘net visionary creators’ to the ‘net savvy maintainers’ within one community is at best, volatile. In a second community, whilst succession planning was not entirely overlooked, the lack of skilled volunteers and any resources or plan to up-skill within the community meant that a hiatus was reached.
<b>Build networks and share resources</b>	Communities might lack the economies of scale to tackle some key projects, but by collaborating can leveraged their resources to great effect.

The clearest conclusion from this experience is that a community needs to consider what happens when ICT projects mature. Inherent in this is valuing the worth of such effort as a community resource.

## 2.9.4 Strategic Alignment of CI Initiatives

A key theme to emerge from New Zealand CI initiatives, is that there is a dearth of literature relating to the practical support of and training for personnel (particularly volunteers) for CI projects (B. Craig & Williamson, 2005a, 2005b).

There is limited literature available that discusses the operational form and function of such projects: the details of how they work, how they are resourced and how they are planned. There is an increasing range of literature regarding the tactical level of community ICT, some of which has been discussed above, including models for how communities could go about creating ICT projects. The research literature is generally weak on the detail or application of those models; in other words the colloquial 'how to'. At the strategic or policy levels, there is limited discussion in the locally relevant literature on what the benefits of community ICT are. Further, beyond the New Zealand Digital Strategy itself, few local strategies exist<sup>22</sup>. This literature review further suggests that there is poor alignment between strategy or policy (the aim of the initiative), the tactical (the models and frameworks needed to achieve the strategy) and the day-to-day implementation and operation of community ICT projects. The hierarchical relationship between strategy, tactics and operations is diagrammatically depicted in Figure 7:



Figure 7 - Strategic planning pyramid.

This review has found that there is a paucity of adequately evaluative literature relating to low-level grass-roots experiences with community ICT applicable in the situation being studied here. The existence of such a literature gap may well be due a demonstrable failure to systematically link government strategy and policy to the operational environment for Community ICT. Information systems strategic planning models, such as those proposed by Papp, Luftman, and Brier (1996) allow organisations to measure the alignment of their ICT

operations and strategy with the organisational goals and objectives. In particular, they identify a range of inhibitors to good strategic alignment, including:

- Lack of ICT planning
- Poor relationships
- Poor technology leadership (not operations)
- Lack of training and resources
- Unclear organisations goals and visions
- Little or no attempt to include ICT within the wider organisational strategy.

As the literature discussed so far shows, these are all factors common to the deployment of community ICT. In particular, the ad-hoc, often voluntary nature of such projects, where enthusiasm is more important than experience, make them reactionary and difficult projects to sustain. More often than not, practitioners are so busy ‘doing’, that they have little time to align projects with strategic goals, let alone document and publish detailed accounts of what is going on, their successes and failures.

This gap can also be explained using Mintzberg’s (1993) models for effective organisations. The development of policy and strategy being driven from a model of ‘professional bureaucracy’, where there is a reliance on and need for coordination and a standardisation of skills, along with their associated design parameters, training and indoctrination. This is overlaid, rather like oil on water in an ad-hoc model, which represents the day-to-day life of a CI initiative, where innovation and problem solving are inherent, temporal and reactive. There is little time in this latter mode of operation to satisfy the reporting and management requirements of the former, or to document and evaluate the process.

This failure to connect and align the strategic, tactical and operational aspect of CI initiatives – often through the complete lack of a tactical layer – is an obvious potential cause of failure and inefficiency in this area of research. This also makes evaluating projects difficult: It is hard to measure the success of a project when it cannot be measured against strategic objectives.

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<sup>22</sup> Notable exceptions discussed elsewhere include Waitakere City Council and Wellington City Council.

## 2.10 Conclusion

There is a strong body of literature describing both the positive and negative impact of ICT, and the internet in particular, on society and communities. Increasingly, research and policy is focusing on what is being called eGovernment both from a service delivery perspective and from a change management perspective with respect to 'democracy'. However, this is most often from the perspective of increasing efficiencies within the *status quo* of structure, 'societal place' and purpose. There is far less literature relating to ICT's impact on the participatory, community or 'grass-roots' agenda for political change. Research labelled as 'eDemocracy' often focuses on technology as an extension of existing systems, such as electronic voting (S. Coleman & Gøtze, 2002; Rosén, 2001). Yet, the internet has been successfully employed by a wide range of community and activist groups across a wide range of geographical and topical areas.

The foregoing review identifies some of the key literature concerning the impact of ICT on communities that recognises the importance of situating ICT within a societal context. This review found that there was a lack of useful evaluative literature that relates to a participatory, community or 'grass-roots' agenda for political change using ICT. It has also concluded that there is a lack of a body of knowledge that attempts to identify the potential for citizens to become more actively engaged in and to influence the decision-making processes, particularly in a local government context. To date, few rigorous examples exist of participatory methods for involving communities in the design of their own ICT solutions (Day, 2004). The foregoing discussion suggests that a technocratic approach is more common than a participatory one. Despite the requirements of the New Zealand Local Government Act 2002 and the national rhetoric of 'community development', confidence and participation in local government shows evidence of decline.

In summary, the analysis supports the colloquial view which suggests that ICT has the potential to transform citizen engagement with government and thereby develop an 'eDemocracy culture'. Such a culture is essential to the development of new forms of community that can maximise the wonderful opportunities that ICT affords society in

developing a more inclusive governance. Both legislation and case law position an active civil society as a pre-requisite to effective local democracy. Local governments, due to their immediate and close connection to communities, can be a logical starting point for such developments. The rapidly reducing costs and increasing ubiquity of ICT means that communities can publish themselves online and create citizen-led initiatives to influence and interface with governments. However, this does not become truly democratic until the barriers to the ubiquity of ICT have been overcome. This process is two-way. It requires policy to promote ICT literacy as a life skill and to ensure that access is available to all who want it, whilst recognising that no two communities are alike.

The foregoing literature highlights the need for, and value of, research which explores the impact that ICT has in facilitating and influencing increased and effective participation of citizens in the design, development and deployment of democratic processes. This is particularly the case where such research is itself grounded in a community and forms part of a community driven process. In the next chapter, this discussion is extended to describe a context for the research and to identify the methodological framework of the proposed study.





# Chapter 3 – Research Context and Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the selection of a methodological approach to address the research questions presented in Chapter 1. As Glaser (2004, p.1) notes, “the difference between the particularistic, routine, normative data we all garner in our everyday lives and scientific data is that the latter is produced by a methodology.” He goes on to add that the methodology “chosen to make an ensuing research scientific has many implicit and explicit problems. It implies a certain type of data collection, the pacing and timing for data collection, a type of analysis and a specific type of research product” (p.1). This chapter sets out to describe the methodological approach to this research and the underlying philosophical assumptions. It does this by describing the chosen paradigm, theoretical framework, methods of data analysis and theory generation.

The chapter will discuss a research framework that acknowledges both research and technology as part of a wider social process, it then goes on to describe an explanatory mixed methods approach, using two sequential methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007; Morse, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The chapter then addresses the choice of Critical Social Theory (CST) as a research paradigm that can be used to identify barriers to open communication and dialogue and the potential to transform communication within a public sphere. It describes the researcher’s axiological standpoint, which is pertinent to the selection of a research paradigm (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007; Giddings & Grant, 2006), the research process and ethical considerations. Because of the mixed methods approach, the methodological discussion in this chapter is brief and the research design and methodology for each of the two phases are described in detail in future chapters. Chapter 4 discusses the development and testing of the survey instrument and Chapter 6 describes the

rationale for choosing grounded theory methodology (GTM) and the application of it for Phase II.

### 3.2 Research Framework

According to Creswell (1998b), research begins with the selection of a research paradigm and a plan for pursuing the methodology within the chosen paradigm, including recognition of the projects theoretical drive (Morse, 2003). Interpretivist research is based on the premise that reality is socially constructed and so the researcher often uses qualitative, open-ended techniques to explore and understand the attitudes, opinions, feelings and behaviour of individuals or groups. This research is interested in discovering patterns and motivations and answering the ‘why’ questions and so an appropriate framework is one where patterns that emerge can be noted, whilst the researcher remains aware of their own role in shaping the process (Tolich & Davidson, 1999).

Figure 8, shows an example of the broad choice of research paradigms available for this research:

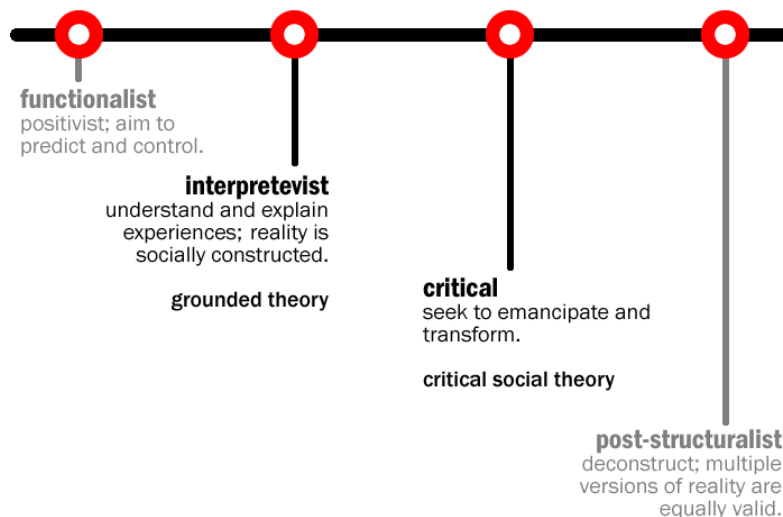


Figure 8: Positioning different research methodologies (Derived from Conrad, 1993)

These research paradigms can be classified within the following broad frameworks (Conrad, 1993; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000):

- Functionalist** Methodologies anchored in the positivist tradition that aims to predict and control. They are, therefore, more appropriate to the research of behaviour or patterns and include structural functionalism and systems theory.
- Interpretivist** Methodologies (methods) which aim to understand and then explain experiences where reality is accepted as socially constructed, such as constructivism, ethnography, phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and the origins of GTM.
- Critical theory** Methodologies which seek to emancipate and transform, such as CST, feminist and neo-Marxist theories.
- Post-modern** Methodologies that deconstruct, attempting to look at the world through a lens where multiple versions of reality are equally valid, for example, post-colonial theories and radical feminism.

This research was interpretive and participatory, informed by CST and drawing upon research in the field of CI and uses a mixed methods approach, with data collected and analysed in two sequential phases. A survey instrument was developed to collect quantitative and qualitative data from a New Zealand-wide population active in their community and local democratic processes. The results of Phase I were then used to develop semi-structured interviews of key informants involved in CI initiatives in Waitakere City.

A mixed methods approach allowed the qualitative findings to be better grounded and the scope of the research to be broadened to discover relevant attributes of community activism, CI and eDemocracy that were not present in the literature. The approach was appropriate for such an emergent field of study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Morse, 2003). A secondary value was that Phase I of the data collection was able to provide a more complete picture of the emergence of ICT amongst those active in civil society; again something lacking in the literature. A sequential design, where one stage commences on completion of the previous stage (Morse, 2003), was chosen to strengthen the results because such an approach can lead to “well-validated and substantiated findings” (Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003, p.229). The sequential approach suited this research as it permitted the scope of the project to be progressively narrowed; starting with a broad review of literature, leading to a

nationally-targeted survey of ICT usage and finally, a set of questions for specific in-depth local interviews.

Key findings from literature discussed in Chapter 2 were used to scope the survey instrument design and to conduct a process of construct validity and pilot testing which were used to ensure rigour (De Vaus, 2003). Data from the survey instrument was used to support the development of an interview instrument to collect in-depth qualitative data from participants in local CI initiatives. The design of the survey is discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Phase II of data collection involved interviews with key local informants and the subsequent analysis of data. GTM positions the researcher as a participant in the social processes and able to effect change, which was considered appropriate for this research because the researcher was located within the community being studied. As the researcher was an active participant in local CI projects during the period of the research, it was the aim of this research to understand the motivation and beliefs of the participants.

GTM's emerging design provides a way of explaining and identifying the processes that occur within social situations (Glaser, 1992). The resulting *grounded theory* is obtained primarily through inductive research of the phenomena that are represented. Data collection, analysis and theory are, therefore, reciprocally related to each other (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). GTM in this context did not guide (or force) the development of an epistemological framework for the research. Therefore, the principles and values of CST were employed to guide the development of a *grounded theory*, which in turn allowed the application of GTM to eschew concepts of homogeneity, conclusiveness, realism and simple discovery for recognition of multiple positions where theory is more tentative, ambiguous and relative (Clarke, 2005). GTM is discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

CST strengthens research where the researcher is part of the community being studied by allowing the researcher to see participants as operating within a number of contrasting and sometimes competing social systems (Kemmis, 2001). CST promotes a process of inquiry that can lead to social transformation through the critique of ideological domination (May, 1996), where knowledge is progressed through a process of open discussion and criticism.

However, it is a philosophy that is subject to continuous refinement as a result of criticism and examination from others (Baert, 1998). The ultimate goal of CST is to understand the relationships that exist between a public sphere and the private citizen (Andersen, 2000). The interpretive theory emerging from the research can be contextualised within a broader socio-political context.

It was also appropriate for this research to use Habermas' theories of the public sphere and of communicative action in the context of local democracy as it allowed for the identification of ways in which the steering politico-bureaucratic media of local and central government colonised the lifeworld of the individual. CST can be used to identify normative conditions for engagement that are required to establish true dialogue and to create the potential to move the locus of power back to the individual and the community as a whole.

CST, and in particular the theories of Habermas, are open to criticism for being too theoretical and not grounded in the reality of the emancipatory struggle (Callinicos, 1999). However, this research does not itself seek to transform or emancipate but rather to describe the experiences of those who are using ICT to create situations that can lead to transformation – and at the same time disseminate new knowledge for those involved in the process so that they might apply what was being discovered during the research. Hence, it was decided to undertake this research from a mixed methods perspective using the approach described herein and being cognisant of the need for a community-based process to be informed by participatory principles. Such an approach is appropriate for research that seeks to understand a social situation and then explain it, whilst remaining compatible CST (Conrad, 1993). As Chapter 2 shows, technology is not neutral and can support the transformation of social and political processes and relationships.

### **3.3 Mixed Methods**

This research set out to develop a theoretical model for emergent eDemocracy; a task well suited to GTM. However, as the research location itself was in the early stages of developing eDemocracy it was not considered feasible to obtain sufficient reliable data on how ICT was

being used solely from this location. Therefore, it was informative and useful in contextualising the subsequent stages to extend the research scope and to collect relevant data that encompassed those active in the community and voluntary sector throughout New Zealand. Whilst this provided a more complete data set, such data was not sufficiently rich to support the development of a theoretical model and was too broad to allow for focus on a specific locale. The solution adopted was to undertake a mixed methods study, where, in Phase I, quantitative and qualitative data collected nationally was used to develop broad findings and to support the development of questions for the qualitative Phase II, focusing on Waitakere City.

As Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007, p.9) note, a “combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone.” It can assist with answering a research question that could not be answered by only taking a qualitative or a quantitative approach and that such an approach “provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research” (p.9). A mixed methods study “gathers more information in different modes about a phenomenon” and the breadth of findings highlight shortcomings in individual methods (Giddings & Grant, 2006, p.6).

The formalised use of mixed methods dates back to the 1960s. During the 1970s-80s the debate between quantitative and qualitative theorists developed such that many saw these as separate, non-interchangeable paradigms. Others saw the potential in merging the two techniques and from this a mixed methods approach has emerged (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Mixed methods research has subsequently developed to become a stand-alone paradigm incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches, operating within a well defined framework and providing the researcher with a range of qualified mixed methods techniques (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Because the methods being combined are potentially drawn from different philosophical paradigms, it is important for the researcher to consider and articulate their philosophical approach to research and whether the methods chosen are appropriate to the research. It is

important to consider how the chosen paradigm influences the application of the methods chosen (Giddings & Grant, 2006). Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) and Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007) observe that the use of critical and emancipatory paradigms in mixed methods research is well documented and suggest that it is an appropriate research framework for a mixed methods study. Assuming a socially-constructed reality and based on the precepts of CST, this research aimed to describe processes occurring within a community and to develop a theory that was grounded in these processes and their attributes. The study reflected a primarily qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. Therefore quantitative data was considered to be best suited to a secondary role of informing the design of a qualitative study and for providing broad demographics and information on what was occurring in a wider community of interest.

Mixed methods research allows for many combinations, be they quantitative and qualitative or even two qualitative methods and research projects can collect data sequentially or in parallel. A typology has been developed to define the elements of a mixed methods study, their sequence and relative importance to the research (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007; Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003; Morse, 2003), using abbreviations to identify QUAN(titative) and QUAL(itative) phases<sup>23</sup> and symbols to denote sequence and relationship:

<b>QUAN + QUAL</b>	Quantitative and qualitative phases occurring in parallel.
<b>QUAN → QUAL</b>	Quantitative and qualitative phases occurring sequentially.
<b>QUAN(qual)</b>	Qualitative phase embedded within a primarily quantitative phase.

There are four primary models of mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007):

<b>Triangulation</b>	The most widely known approach. This is usually a one-phase
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<sup>23</sup> A primary method is defined using uppercase, a secondary one using lowercase.

study using parallel multiple methods, usually quantitative and qualitative:

QUAN + QUAL

**Embedded** This technique embeds one method within another to support the findings from the primary method. For example:

QUAN(qual)

**Explanatory** A two-phase approach where (usually) qualitative data is used to build on quantitative data collected in an earlier phase. It is best suited to situations where the researcher requires additional qualitative data to support findings from a quantitative study or where a broad data set is used to support a more detailed and tightly focused study. For example:

QUAN → QUAL

**Exploratory** A two-phase approach where (usually) specific qualitative findings are further explored through a more generalisable quantitative study. For example:

QUAL → QUAN

For this research, the two phases were sequential. Phase I, a survey, was primarily quantitative with the addition of qualitative questions. Phase II, a qualitative phase followed. The overall design of this research is *explanatory*: the qualitative second phase was used to build on and to explain the primarily quantitative first phase. Phase I used an *embedded* approach where the quantitative survey data was supplemented with qualitative data



collected in parallel. Adopting the standard notation described above this research can be represented as:

**(QUAN + qual) → QUAL**

In presenting the study approach diagrammatically, Figure 9 depicts the individual elements of this mixed methods study, drawing on visual modelling techniques suggested by Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007).

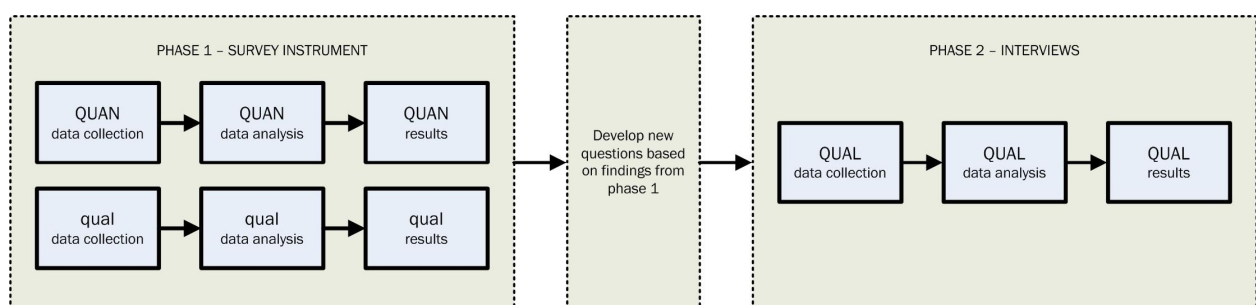


Figure 9: Visual representation of mixed methods study.

In summary, a mixed methods approach using a broad, primarily quantitative survey instrument with embedded qualitative data was used to develop an in-depth and locally focused sequential set of qualitative interviews, supported by a participatory approach using CST. The chosen approach allowed for broad demographic data to be collected on the emerging use of ICT to support local democratic activity and then to discover the actual and detailed processes behind this adoption in a specific location to develop a theoretical model for local citizen-led eDemocracy.

### 3.4 Critical Social Theory

Having provided a context for the research and explored the position of the researcher and the choice of a mixed methods approach, this section describes the origins and components of CST and contextualises it with regard to this research. CST can be defined as an attempt to:

Understand in a rationally responsible manner the oppressive features of a society such that this understanding stimulates its audience to transform their society and thereby liberate themselves (Fay, 1987, p.2).

According to Fay (1987), this places CST at a fundamental variance with early philosophical theories in that, up until this point in time, philosophers had sought only to understand and interpret their world whereas the *raison d'être* of CST is to change the world.

The theoretical framework put forward by the Frankfurt School<sup>24</sup> relies on a synthesis of the theories of a number of earlier philosophers but primarily it was an attempt to fuse the works of Marx, Weber and Freud (Outhwaite, 1994). The School's analysis of modern society is based firstly on Marx's dialectical critique of capitalism and Weber's analysis of rationalisation. However, CST places a greater emphasis on the subjective and cultural features of capitalism and rejects Weber's hypothesis that rationalisation will follow a pre-determined path (Outhwaite, 1994). The second theoretical strand is based on the works of Freud and aims to combine psychoanalysis with Marxist thought, thereby providing a critique of capitalist culture and ideology (Dodd, 1999). Whilst much of the philosophical origins of the Frankfurt School's theories are drawn from Marx and Weber they paradoxically reject many of the arguments of these earlier philosophers, observing that neither Marx nor Weber are able to adequately define the causation or implication of the growth of reason. As Dodd (1999) observed, this is due, in the case of Marx, to an over-reliance on the concept of the forces of production and, in the case of Weber, to a failure to account for "alternative directions that the process of rationalisation might take" (p.62).

Discourse is critically important to CST. It is Habermas' theory (1979; , 1987a; , 1987b; , 1996) that knowledge is progressed through a process of open discussion and criticism and this is a philosophy that he has adopted personally, with many of his theories being refined as a result of criticism and examination from others (Baert, 1998). For Habermas, CST resides at the intersection between philosophy and science (Baert, 1998). It has two epistemological bases, the first is that it seeks to explain the development of modern society and secondly

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<sup>24</sup> See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frankfurt\\_School](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frankfurt_School)

that it defines a “normative project” that is able to define universal ethical principles by which society is able to function (Dodd, 1999, p.105). The ultimate goal, therefore, of Habermas’ over-reaching theories is to understand the relationships that exist between the public sphere and the private citizen (Andersen, 2000).

It is at this point that a difference appears in Habermas’ definition of a CST than that traditionally associated with the Frankfurt School. Where some earlier theorists have attempted to expose contradictions in the nature of reason, Habermas is less pessimistic in approach and has chosen to accept a duality of reason (Andersen, 2000). Habermas proposed that reason is grounded in praxis and that the duality that exists can be expressed by way of seeing reason as both instrumental and communicative (Habermas, 1987a, 1987b). It is possible for a parallel to be drawn between this duality of reason and what Habermas describes as the two distinct patterns of development that can be observed in modern society, namely technological progress and moral progress (Dodd, 1999). According to Dodd (1999, p.106), “this theoretical argument provides the foundation for Habermas’ conception of critical theory as a normative project.”

It is clear from the foregoing description that CST offers a valid theoretical deconstruction of communication and power issues that can strengthen research which is interested in identifying the nature of power relations between government and community and which attempts to understand the mediating role played by ICT in this situation. The next section will describe the key components of CST in detail, including communicative action, the public sphere, lifeworld and systemworld.

### 3.4.1 Concepts of Critical Social Theory

Habermas (1987a; 1987b) developed a number of key concepts that defined his own version of CST:

**Communicative Action** Action oriented toward the understanding of one’s situation and dependent on the mutual recognition of perceptions of

the environment, social norms and the identities of individuals (Andersen, 2000).

**Lifeworld**

The basis for communicative action is the participant's worldview, which encapsulates such things as cultural and social expression, education, communication and family life (Dodd, 1999).

**Systemworld**

The social systems of action from which purposive rational actions are organised and which function relatively independently of the individual, including the political-administrative and the media (Andersen, 2000, p.331).

**Public sphere**

A subset of lifeworld, Habermas sees the public sphere as a virtual (in the sense that it is not necessarily real or physical) community that potentially exists in any identifiable space. It is ideally constituted of a collective of people acting as a public who are articulating the needs of the society with the state. Importantly for this research, it is in a public sphere that opinion is generated and attitudes formed and these in turn act to affirm or challenge normative conditions. Ideally, the public sphere is the source of the public opinion necessary to legitimate authority within democratic systems (Habermas, 1989).

### **3.4.1.1 Communicative Action**

The theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1987a, 1987b) can be seen as an over-arching attempt to create a grand theory about the nature of the relationships that exist and how communication takes place within and between these relationships (Outhwaite, 1994).

Communicative action is a major foundation for many of Habermas' concepts, including those of lifeworld and systemworld (Andersen, 2000) and the inter-relationship between concepts is important. Given the complexity of Habermas' work, it is important to remain cognisant of other key concepts he developed in discussing communicative action, lifeworld and systemworld, namely discourse ethics, formal pragmatics, knowledge-constructive interests and strategic action (Dodd, 1999).

A significant influence on much of Habermas' work on communication was Talcott Parsons and in particular the theory of the Structure of Social Action, published in 1937 (May, 1996). Parsons is himself considered to be a pre-eminent post-war US sociologist, his reputation being due to the broad scope and depth of analysis contained in his theory on human social action (Lidz, 2000). Parsons' aim was to develop a coherent conceptual scheme that could be applied across all times and places, which would address all aspects of human organisation and which would be open to further refinement. His ultimate goal was to create conceptual schemes that would facilitate empirical understanding and could be used to describe the relationship between economic and other social institutions. In doing this, Parsons developed a 'four function paradigm', which stated that all social systems must be able to manage four system 'problems' (later to be renamed 'functions') in order to be able to function. Parsons observed that social relationships and institutions could be classified by the way in which they contribute to managing each function (Lidz, 2000). According to Lidz (2000), Parsons' theory described the four functions as follows:

<b>Adaptation</b>	The process of gaining generalised control over ones environment.
<b>Goal attainment</b>	The process of organising activities of social units into a concerted effort to achieve a desired change in the systems relationship to its environment.
<b>Integration</b>	The process of adjustment to one another by units of the system in order to promote long term attachment and/or mutual dependence among autonomous units.
<b>Pattern maintenance</b>	The process of generating long-term commitments to shared values and principles that distinguish one system from another.

According to Frank (2000) and May (1996), Parsons' four-function paradigm became the theoretical core of Habermas' theory of communicative action. Habermas argues that whenever a conversation takes place, one of these functions is being enacted (Habermas, 1987b). However, this is not to say that Habermas necessarily agreed with Parsons, in fact in

many cases the opposite is true: Whilst Habermas can be seen to concur with Parsons in-so-far-as he believes that societies require integration, Habermas goes further, drawing on Marxist philosophies to state that societies are also in crisis (Baert, 1998). Habermas argues that today's capitalist societies have eroded and ultimately disabled the core integrative function of communication and this will be explored later in the section discussing systemworld.

Habermas sees Parsons' four functions as being divided between the system- and life-worlds:

<b>Systemworld</b>	Adaptation
	Goal attainment
<b>Lifeworld</b>	Influence
	Value-commitments

By adapting Parsons' four-function paradigm to describe the legitimation crisis of society, what Habermas would refer to as the colonisation of the lifeworld by the system world, Habermas created the theoretical core of the theory of communicative action (Frank, 2000). Much of Habermas' work has dealt with the role of language and an underlying philosophy that people possess specific skills or competencies (Baert, 1998), indeed the linguistic aspects of Habermas' theories are based on the assertion that to understand an utterance is to understand the claim that it raises (May, 1996).

The following sections describe the concepts of *lifeworld*, or the world as it is viewed from the perspective of the individual mediated through communication, and *systemworld*, which is concerned with maintaining the stability of the system through market mechanisms.

#### **3.4.1.1.1 Lifeworld**

The pathologies which arise in the lifeworld, resulting in systemic imbalances, are a theme seen throughout much of Habermas' earlier work, from his writings on structural changes in the public sphere, his criticism of Freudian psychoanalysis, his linguistic turn and his more recent writings on law and democracy. It is these imbalances, Habermas claimed, that

impede the production of meaningful communication, which is aimed at the formation of understanding and a 'democratic will' amongst people. Such pathologies appear in the form of economic disruption and in the questioning of the legitimacy of the state. In the case of Marx's work, such pathologies in the lifeworld were caused by the capitalist system and represented in the state of alienation of the workers. For Weber, the conflicts that arose led to the triumph of formal rationality over substantive rationality. However, Habermas considered such explanations insufficient and he goes on to overcome the limitations of Marx's materialistic reduction of the reflective process to encapsulate only the means of production by incorporating the concept of idealism. Habermas then attempts to develop a theory of rationalisation that is on one level a derivative of Weber but which seeks to overcome the pessimism of such Nietzschean-inspired social theory, where reason becomes viewed as the 'will to power' (May, 1996).

Lifeworld is the world viewed from the perspective of the individual (Andersen, 2000) and constructed through language (Outhwaite, 1994). Weber argued that there is a conflict between an individual's orientation to success versus their orientation to understanding (May, 1996). Habermas disagrees, preferring to adopt the concept of lifeworld, or *lebenswelt*, that originates in the phenomenological works of Husserl and Heidegger, where:

Understanding presupposes certain tacit pre-understandings which allows us, without being consciously aware of it, to interpret the actions and utterances of others (Callinicos, 1999, p.285)

Outhwaite (1994) observed, however, that Habermas' concept of lifeworld differs somewhat from the original phenomenological model by placing a greater emphasis on the social and cultural focus.

Like Weber and Parsons, Habermas views modernisation as a process of differentiation, which is a primary influence on his development of the concept of lifeworld (Callinicos, 1999). Habermas believes that there are two distinct concepts of lifeworld, which Outhwaite (1994, p.113) defines as a "quasi-transcendental or formal-pragmatic concept" and the "everyday or sociological concept which is relevant to discussions of its colonisation and

other aspects of system-lifeworld relations.” The former can be seen as forming a common background for communicative action to take place. Although Habermas argues that these two concepts are different, the formal-pragmatic concept is of limited use and it has been described as being rather “like the face of Cheshire Cat, giving the real lifeworld a spurious veneer of mutuality” (Outhwaite, 1994, p.114).

#### **3.4.1.1.2 Systemworld**

According to Outhwaite (1994), Habermas’ distinction of lifeworld and systemworld has raised doubts amongst commentators, primarily because Habermas’ own definition of lifeworld is inconclusive. Concerns have also been raised as to the way relationships between the two worlds are defined and because of a reliance on systems theory (Outhwaite, 1994), simplistically speaking, where lifeworld is the world of the individual, systemworld is the system of society that surrounds it. This system of society, as Habermas defines it, is one of economic and political action, governed by a steering media of money and power. Where lifeworld is focused on the individual and on communicative action, the systemworld is anonymous, organised and complex, yet existing in parallel with the lifeworld, the two operating simultaneously (Andersen, 2000).

Systemworld is concerned with functionality and efficiency and about maintaining the stability of the system through market mechanisms with the minimum of communication. An extreme – but real – example of the systemworld in action is provided by Ritzer (2000), who described the perfect rational system in his depiction of McDonalds. Ritzer describes an organisation based on efficiency, predictability, calculability and control. The potential for individual dialogue is managed to the point so as not to exist amongst or between employees and customers. To Ritzer, this environment is fully controlled and the rational system paramount such that there is no place for communicative action to take place. In other words, the individual is rendered solely as a functional unit of production within the system.

For Habermas, the systemworld equates to Parson’s ‘Adaptation’ and ‘Goal attainment’ functions and, as Andersen (2000) observed, the social systems of action are where purposive rational actions originate and are organised independently of the individual. Action is based



on a rational and strategic interpretation of what will provide the greatest return to the system and not on the needs or interests of individuals.

Habermas (1987a, 1987b) criticises the objectification of systems theory to the point where everything is reduced to a system controlled by the steering media because this removes the possibility of solidarity and personal identity outside the lifeworld. In turn, this allows the individual to become absorbed by system roles and, therefore, subject to the system's demand for efficiency (Andersen, 2000). Habermas identifies four different types of social formation that can be used to describe the way in which social orders become legitimised (Habermas, 1987a, 1987b):

<b>Primitive societies</b>	Based on age and gender roles and organised through a kinship system. In such a system, change is a reflection of changes in demographics, ecology or inter-ethnic associations (trade and war).
<b>Traditional societies</b>	Where a political class rules and where threats arise from internal contradictions that lead to problems in the ideological sustainability of the ruling system.
<b>Liberal-capitalist societies</b>	Where the primary organisational principle is that of economic production, where the political sphere is uncoupled and oppression becomes anonymous and depoliticised. This leads to a universal tendency amongst ideologies, which must appeal to common interests.
<b>Advanced capitalism</b>	A system of formal representative democracy that legitimises interventionist practices and where control rests with a number of oligopolistic corporations. The resulting society operates by keeping participation below the level at which the populace recognises the paradox of a socialised administration supporting the appropriation of surplus value by private source.

Far from being an absolute opponent of today's manifestation of the system world, the advanced capitalist economy, Habermas views this as an unfinished project and does not ascribe to the purest Marxist views of a political-economic alternative as being viable. In many ways, Habermas' work can be seen as a form of utopian realism and Habermas has been a leader in the movement towards developing a democratic system where the most reasonable argument is accepted, so introducing principles of communicative action into the systemworld (Frank, 2000).

### 3.4.2 Critical Analysis

So far, this chapter has introduced the key constructs within the theory of communicative action – lifeworld and systemworld – in an attempt to identify not only the epistemologies that support these constructs and this research but also to relate how these concepts relate to each other. CST can be seen as “complex and multi-dimensional” (Endres, 1996, p.1) and Habermas' theories have been developed over periods of time and new theories are built on the foundations of earlier works (Andersen, 2000). Complicating this still further is Habermas' own assertion that “modernity is an incomplete project, and the same is true of his own work” (Outhwaite, 1994, p.1). In critiquing the theories of Habermas, it must not be forgotten that in many ways Habermas is his own greatest critic and he has shown a distinct willingness to listen to criticism and actively revise his own theories based on this, which leads to Habermas' work being an evolving and ever changing project in much the same way as he sees modernity as unfinished (Callinicos, 1999). There is, therefore, some risk that theoretical constructs have become outmoded or superseded and this is something that any researcher in this field must be aware of.

Critics of Habermas have observed that the theories discussed so far in this chapter adopt a misleading differentiation between causal explanation and interpretation. A criticism that has been levelled at critical social theorists in general is that they have failed to resolve a range of epistemological issues that it was their intention to resolve (Held cited in Blaikie, 1993). Specifically, Habermas is often criticised as being remote because the real world is seldom as clear-cut as his theories assume (Outhwaite, 1994).

Keat and Urry (cited in Blaikie, 1993) argued that Habermas was correct in the distinctions he identified in the forms of knowledge that were appropriate to the empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic sciences. Although they considered that a potential danger existed that could lead to CST being divided between causal explanation and interpretive understanding, arguing that in fact both models were valid. Giddens (1985) disagreed, claiming that Habermas' classification of empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic sciences was unsatisfactory. The first problem arises, according to Giddens, because interest in meaningful understanding is more prevalent than Habermas suggested and it is not confined to the social sciences. Secondly, Habermas' interest in prediction and control is, according to Giddens, not logically connected to concerns with causal explanation. Blaikie (1993) agrees with this position, observing that Habermas' attempt to introduce categorical distinctions between forms of knowledge and enquiry has been unsuccessful and that there is a qualitative difference between disciplines guided by technical and practical interest and those guided by an emancipatory interest. Although Habermas was able to describe the conditions required to produce particular types of knowledge in the former two, the guiding principles of the latter appear different and, according to Blaikie, it is not possible to specify formal conditions that are required.

### 3.4.3 Summary

Although Habermas is considered to be on one of the most influential social theorists of the second half of the twentieth century, his importance and influence has not necessarily rendered his work more accessible or easily applicable to researchers. It is true to say that much of his writings, and interpretations of his writings, are complex, dense and generally free of contextual references. Accordingly, they do not lend themselves easily to adoption as frameworks for investigating the social context of information systems. Habermas has taken as a base for his own theories many of the great social theorists that went before him, beginning with a Marxist perspective. He added the works of Weber and Freud, thereby revealing his grounding in the Frankfurt School. Habermas' journey continued by taking ideas from such leading thinkers as Kant, Parsons, Piaget, Hegel and Heidegger and developing these into his own theories of communicative action, lifeworld and systemworld. In doing so, Habermas revealed his primary concern as that of language; how language

emancipates and how language is used to control an individual's freedom. Going further, he addressed the concern that systems are created to maintain the power imbalances inherent in capitalist societies and thereby oppress citizens. Therefore, as shown above, Habermas' theories are open to considerable criticism, not least of these being that his theories are not grounded in the real world but are abstract, academic concepts. However, Habermas himself is revealed as a willing recipient of such criticism, considering his own work to be an ongoing project, in the same way he saw modernity, and he has demonstrated a willingness to accept criticism, ever refining his theories in the face of such information.

### **3.4.4 Relevance of CST to this Research**

This research occurred in an emerging field that, as such, lacks a 'traditional' methodological approach. Therefore it has been necessary to adopt a research framework that fitted the study but which, given that this research intersects both theory and practice, had a strong theoretical base that allowed for the results to be translated into practical suggestions. The relevance of CST lies directly in the ability it offers to challenge and address the issues that lead to power imbalances and the establishment of hegemonies, which is achieved by placing a strong focus on the role of communication, and specifically the idea of communicative reason. As considered in Chapter 2, communication and particularly the media have never been more powerful and, therefore, open to abuse, manipulation and control. This coincides with a trend that sees the rights of the individual appearing to be further eroded by both the state and corporations. According to Habermas (1979) there exists a 'community of humanity' over and above the individual communities and that the normative precondition of such a community is its tacit knowledge of and adherence to a belief in the possibility of communicative rationality. For Habermas, this is the defining normative dimension of social life. Since it is this communication that mediates the public sphere, Habermas' theory of communicative action will be used to identify the normative conditions of engagement that are required in order for the decision-making process to be considered democratic and truly participatory. This will be done by examining data collected during the study through a lens that privileges issues of power and communication, such that instances of technology use as empowering, liberating, inconsequential or frustrating will be drawn out and considered in the context of the participants and the systems in which they operate.

In the above context, CST is valuable in informing this research because of Habermas' attempts to create an over-arching grand theory about the nature of the relationships that exist and how communication takes place within and between these relationships. Inherent in this assumption is the supposition that relationships exist beyond language (Outhwaite, 1994). Anderson (2000) stated that communicative action is action oriented toward the understanding of one's situation, where this is itself dependent on the mutual recognition of perceptions of the environment, social norms and the identities of individuals. An exploration of the theoretical constructs of communicative action and in particular Habermas' definitions of systemworld, lifeworld and of the rationality of human action can facilitate understanding of what is happening within the constructs of a 'virtual community' that is grounded in the use of new and emerging ICT (and which are considered in Chapter 2). Habermas' theories have been explored in some detail as an appropriate framework for research within the context of ICT (Ngwenyama & Lee, 1997). The appropriateness of CST as a philosophical framework for research in this field is well accepted (Boudreau, 1997; Myers, 1997; Ngwenyama & Lee, 1997). As Boudreau (1997) explains, CST is an appropriate philosophical framework for research involving ICT because:

Issues of power may be observed in situations of [information systems] development or information use (p.1).

Furthermore, Boudreau (1997) observes that although ICT can be viewed as an instrument for control they are usually only studied because of technical interest. In this context, Boudreau suggests that CST can challenge hegemonic assumptions and:

Rather than exploring a situation so as to control it (technical interest) or to understand it (practical interest), an emancipatory interest seeks to free people from physical, mental and social distortions and injustice (Boudreau, 1997, p.1).

In the foregoing milieu, ICT are seen by some as a tool with the potential to assist in contextualising Habermas' concept of the public sphere, aiding as they do communication and the open flow of information such that ICT can mediate attempts at colonisation by the

systemworld (O’Neil, 2002). Habermas (2006) suggests that the emergence of the internet has fragmented and decentralised the context in which communication occurs. He notes both the potentially subversive nature of the internet and how it has created a less formalised matrix of communication channels, where experts must vie with unedited egalitarian sources, which has the effect of weakening traditional media and shifting attention to an anonymous and dispersed public. Citizens are then able to concentrate on what Habermas refers to as “the same critically filtered issues and journalistic pieces” (p.4). Negatively, Habermas believes that the open nature of the internet causes difficulties when focussing public debate, an important prerequisite for rational deliberation.

Dahlberg (2001a) showed that a ‘virtual community’ existing in cyberspace can be viewed as a public sphere and that it is possible to identify and describe a set of normative conditions that are required for social integration to exist (Friedland, 2001). Such normative conditions, Dahlberg argued, can be achieved through communicative action and by minimising the systemic interruption that occurs when individual choice is dictated by the steering media. An example is the Minnesota E-Democracy online discussion environment, a mostly local email list created to discuss issue of local democracy in Minnesota and in operation since 1994. Dahlberg related postings to this list to Habermas’ theories of the public sphere and communicative action and, in so doing, developed a set of normative conditions for the virtual public sphere, which follow:

<b>Autonomy from state and economic power</b>	Discourse must be based on the concerns of citizens as a public rather than driven by the media of money and administrative power that facilitate the operations of the market and state.
<b>Exchange and critique of criticisable moral-practical validity claims</b>	Deliberation involves engaging in reciprocal critique of normative positions that are provided with reasons and thus are criticisable – are open to critique rather than dogmatically asserted.
<b>Reflexivity</b>	Participants must critically examine their cultural values, assumptions and interests, as well as the larger social

	context.
<b>Ideal role taking</b>	Participants must attempt to understand the argument from the other's perspective. This requires a commitment to an ongoing dialogue with difference in which interlocutors respectfully listen to each other.
<b>Sincerity</b>	Each participant must make a sincere effort to make known all information – including their true intentions, interests, needs and desires – as relevant to the particular problem under consideration.
<b>Discursive inclusion and equality</b>	Every participant affected by the validity claims under consideration is equally entitled to introduce and question any assertion whatsoever. Inclusion can be limited by inequalities from outside of discourse – by formal or informal restrictions to access. It can also be limited by inequalities within discourse, where some dominate discourse and others struggle to get their voices heard.

Finally, it is worth observing that critics argue that Habermas' concept of a 'public sphere' is idealised and potentially unobtainable beyond its theoretical existence. For example, Luhmann (cited in Outhwaite, 1994, p.11) sees public opinion as a sphere of communication becoming "increasingly differentiated, specialised, institutionalised and professionalised." Cunningham (2000, p.3) explored this in his discussion of minoritarian public spheres, which are "specific spaces of self- and community-making and identity." Therefore, it is not proposed to attempt to describe an ideal public sphere within this research. Since communication spaces are now more complex, multi-ethnic and saturated, rather it is more appropriate to consider the concept of fragmented sphericules of public space and opinion (Gitlin, 1998). If this is the case, then the internet can be considered as a rich communication media with the potential to increase diversity, a place where many such sphericules could potentially be created and sustained. Indeed, Poster (1995) cautioned us not to accept the internet as a simple addition to the public sphere since its network culture is new and as likely to lead to challenge of the status quo as to acceptance of it.

The foregoing describes how CST can be used to identify imbalances in power relations and to promote discursive solutions that resolve conflicts between the systemworld and the lifeworld. In the context of this research, CST provides an over-arching epistemology that recognises the significance of power relations and hegemonies that exist in the relationships between civil society and government and it suggests ways in which ICT might be used to overcome such situations if they are viewed as a source of power.

### **3.5 Researcher's Position**

It is important for researchers to identify their own philosophical and axiological position as well as their own embeddedness within the research, if such a position exists. DeSouza (2004) suggests that research is incomplete until the researcher's role in creating it has been explored and the researcher located as a co-participant in the "dynamic interrelationship of the research process" (p.473). Understanding one's place in the research aids reflexivity and helps to "develop an awareness of how [one's] presence affects not just the outcomes of the research but the process as well" (p.473).

Interpretivist and critical paradigms require both objectivity and sensitivity in the emergence of theory. However, it also recognises that researchers come to their study with subjectivity and bias for the research, the research environment and how they see the world (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this instance, the researcher has been an active participant in local CI initiatives since 1999 and continued to be throughout the period of this research. Therefore, occasions arise where it is potentially difficult to differentiate between the more objective emic knowledge, emerging from conceptual schemes and categories inherent in the methodology, and subjective etic knowledge, derived from the environment in which the research occurs and the researcher is embedded.

Fortunately, multiple positions are not a negative. In the case of this research, they allow for reflexive conversations with research participants to occur over time and for ideas emerging from the research to generate new project ideas and changes in direction within the local



environment. An example is the creation of a Digital City Strategy for Waitakere City<sup>25</sup>. Convergence of differently acquired knowledge can be beneficial to theory generation and to the confirmability of an emergent theory. Typically, convergence can occur when intellectual ideas are integrated with personal experience such that the emotional and rational facets can be linked as tools for generating rigorous data (Allen, 2000). Such reflexivity goes beyond simply reflecting on one's experience, "more than a 'dear diary' outline of events, reflexivity requires one to stand outside one's own experiences and interrogate one's role, values, beliefs and assumptions underpinning one's participation in the research" (DeSouza, 2004, p.471).

Over the period of the researcher's involvement in local CI initiatives<sup>26</sup>, the roles adopted by the researcher within the community of study have varied. They range from establishing community websites to membership of Council committees and working groups to developing policy. This has given the researcher differing perspectives on the local situation and access to different stakeholder groups, allowing the researcher to form a broader view of the situation and to influence and be influenced by a wider constituency. Whilst one constant has been a long-term position advocating for systemic change, it is recognised that this role can switch quickly and for short periods of time when specific issues arise or conflicts occur.

The systems and processes affected by – and that themselves affect – CI in Waitakere City are not static. For instance, in the early days of the researcher's involvement, there appeared to be little understanding at an official (government) organisational level and limited community interest or involvement. Like many other areas of New Zealand society in the late 1990s, ICT did not appear to be a normative part of civil society in Waitakere City. Since this time, progress has been made on both the community and council sides<sup>27</sup>. It was through a process of advocacy, campaigning and confrontation that awareness of and interest in the potential for CI, and with it eDemocracy, has been increased. Some of the early experiences of CI in Waitakere City are described by the researcher in a paper written prior to the

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<sup>25</sup> See: [www.waitakeredigitalcity.com](http://www.waitakeredigitalcity.com).

<sup>26</sup> The researcher's role in Waitakere City is discussed in Chapter 1.

<sup>27</sup> Examples of local CI initiatives are discussed in Chapter 1.

commencement of this research (Williamson, 2003) and referred to in more detail above on page 70.

Over time, the city council as an organisation has taken an increasing interest in understanding the social, cultural and economic benefits of CI. Council has become more engaged in the process. However, power imbalances are still clearly demonstrable and an air of unequal partnership prevails, with the Council seeing itself as 'in charge', positioning the researcher as less of an outsider to the development of policies and strategies relating to ICT and more at the centre of the public process and debate. Indeed, in the early days of this effort, those from the community who were advocating for more effective use of ICT were a minority, not part of the mainstream debate and were viewed with some caution by the Council (despite some political support) – much like Moyer's (2001) role of *rebel*. At the time of writing the researcher was positioned as a trusted advisor on matters relating to community ICT to some parts of Council, whilst still potentially seen as a 'community activist' in this area by others. Advocacy is now seen as being about the bigger picture and actively collaborating with a range of formal and informal actors to achieve this. At the outset of this research, advocacy was much more project focussed and localised. Beyond Waitakere City the researcher acted as an advisor to the New Zealand Government<sup>28</sup> and feedback received from other participants in Waitakere City, suggests that this added credibility to both the local role of the researcher and to local initiatives.

The researcher was not only an active participant in the processes being examined, but has also to at least some degree been influential in determining these processes. Therefore, it was, important (to the researcher at least) to be aware that whilst advocacy can be a catalyst to grassroots empowerment and is able to trigger necessary political debates, prior knowledge and reputation gives the researcher a position of power in the current process that could potentially influence and bias informants and privilege one view over others. Because the action of undertaking this research influences and informs the processes being studied, the research investigation needs to be undertaken with an open mind and voice must be given to participants from all sides of the debate such that an honest representation

of the situation emerges. This was achieved through regular interaction with participants in the research and others involved in either CI initiative or council process. Through a process of dialogue and reflexivity, the researcher was able to 'check in' to evaluate the influence they were having on the process and to reflect on the position of others.

It follows from the foregoing that there is a dual role between participant in the process and researcher. As discussed above, a strategy of reflexivity was used, whereby the researcher attempted not to:

Lose focus on telling it how you see it... But also, reflect constantly on how these data are made and the part you play in them (Richards, 2005, p.42).

In this research reflexivity is achieved by a process of diarising comments, ideas and emerging theories and through the processes of memoing and diagramming that form a part of GTM<sup>29</sup>.

### 3.6 Undertaking the Research

The previous sections described the philosophical, theoretical and design considerations of the research. The next section documents the process of undertaking the research, describing the research locations and contexts, including:

- Phase I: A national survey of people involved in community ICT.
- Phase II: Interviews with key individuals in Waitakere City involved in community ICT.

The use of a critical framework for this research was deemed important to the process because citizens make changes thoughtfully through a process of critical reflection, or reflexivity. Within this process actors consider their current circumstances, what might lead

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<sup>28</sup> Deputy Chair of the New Zealand Government's Digital Strategy Advisory Group.

<sup>29</sup> Discussed in Chapter 6.

to those circumstances occurring and the development of new practices that could lead to a change in their circumstances.

There is an inherent commitment to develop a social, economic and political responsiveness to the needs and opinions of ordinary people within this research that mirrors the precepts of critical and interpretivist research rather than those of more conventional social research, which is often aimed at maintaining existing political, ideological and power systems. As Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) observe, there are numerous differences in the approaches taken to critical research. These, they argue, relate not to the machinery of research (its tools and techniques) but, concurring with Habermas (1974), to differences in the philosophical standpoint and location of the researcher and the research act.

It is important for the researcher to be both a participant and an observer within the research, acknowledging one's own role and developing relationships with the participants.

Participatory research is directed toward studying, reframing, and reconstructing practices that are inherently social. If practices are social interactions that occur amongst people, then changing practices must itself be a social process. In the case of this research, the social relationships that exist between participants in the CI projects are as important as the projects themselves and the research sets out to identify what processes exist and what interventions or actions might lead to transformation. The research does not attempt to follow actors through a cycle of research, reflection and action that are familiar components of participatory methodologies, however, it is true to say that the researcher is, as Guba and Lincoln (1989) described, in a 'respondent as co-researcher' relationship in which:

Human participants [are] accorded the privilege of sharing their constructions and working toward a common, consensual, more fully informed and sophisticated, joint construction, [where] they [are] accorded a full measure of conceptual parity (p.11).

### **3.6.1 Ethical Considerations**

Issues of ethical veracity arise in all research, however, qualitative studies can exhibit particular and potentially challenging ethical issues (Bouma, 2000; Tolich & Davidson, 1999).

In this study, the researcher is both an outsider (conducting research) and an insider (involved in the process being studied) since the researcher had existing relationships with participants in the study (this was particularly true in the Phase II of data collection). Long term involvement leads to rapport developing between researcher and participant and raises the potential for inappropriate disclosure to be made. Matters were revealed to the researcher that might be best kept out of the public domain, either because they are personal or relate to confidential material. The researcher has taken steps to ensure that any such material has been withheld from the final research report and that, when unsure, verification was obtained from a participant. A process that included providing copies of interview transcripts to participants and seeking feedback on the content of those transcripts.

Parallel to the research, events have occurred within the community to which the researcher belongs and the researcher can become aware of information that is not in the public domain and it is important that this is not used as collateral material in the study (Bouma, 2000). Whilst this study does draw upon formal minutes and personal observations made by the researcher at meetings, all of these events were in the public domain. Meetings were either open to the public (such as council meetings), information on them was subsequently published on a website or, if not formally published, minutes and correspondence is available to the public under the [New Zealand] Official Information Act 1982.

Participants in Phase I of data collection are anonymous and cannot be identified from comments published in this thesis. Confidentiality is an issue of ethical significance for researchers in New Zealand, given its size and relatively small population. Traditional methods of masking true identity, such as the use of pseudonyms for research participants and renaming geographic locations are not necessarily useful or even appropriate as readers, and particularly those with some local knowledge, can often deduce true identities and locations through other cues inherent in the text (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). All participants in Phase II of data collection agreed to be identified such that their names and roles could be used and attributed to comments made<sup>30</sup>. This step was important because a number of participants in the research were public figures and the value of their opinions was

predicated by the position they held. Attempting to obscure the identity of a public figure is “usually not a feasible option, not only would it destroy the salience of the interview, but also it is impossible. Putting together even a few minor details, could reveal the identity of the person” (Corti, Day, & Backhouse, 2000, p.12).

The research was carried out with ethical approval from Central Queensland University’s Human Research Ethics Committee and Monash University’s Standing Committee on Ethics in Research involving Humans.

### 3.7 Conclusion

In previous chapters the research questions were defined and literature informing those questions reviewed. This chapter has described a research framework, paradigm and methodological approach. It has done this through an exploration of CST and by describing the researcher’s own position and local context. It has defined a mixed methods approach, where a primarily quantitative survey was used to develop a second qualitative phase. It briefly introduced the development of the survey instrument and provided an overview of the key concepts and processes relating to the methodology for Phase II of data collection, GTM. It has justified how the mixed methods approach was appropriate to the epistemological and ontological positions held by the researcher and to the way in which the survey instrument and GTM have been operationalized in this research.

The chapters that follow replicate the sequential approach to data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 describes the design and testing of the survey instrument and Chapter 5 presents the data and a discussion of the findings from the survey instrument. These findings are then used to scope the domain of the research with regard to the research questions and, in Chapter 6, identify issues for further enquiry during Phase II of data collection, along with an extensive discussion of GTM. The research findings and a discussion relating to Phase II are provided in Chapter 7. The findings from both phases of data collection are then brought together along with a discussion of the emergent basic social process in Chapter 8.

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<sup>30</sup> Refer to Chapter 6 for a detailed discussion.

# Chapter 4 – Research Design: Survey Instrument

## 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has described the research context for a mixed methods study informed by CST that takes an interpretive approach. Chapter 2 introduced relevant literature and highlighted the need for and value of research which explores the impact of ICT in facilitating and influencing increased and effective participation of citizens in the design, development and deployment of local democratic processes. It placed particular emphasis on the need for research that is grounded in a community and forms part of a community driven process. This chapter will describe the design, testing, sample selection and administration of the survey instrument for the first part of the study, is informed by the contextual and methodological discussion in the previous chapter and by the conclusions of the literature review, which are that:

- Research relating to CI and civil society can support the design of the study to understanding and describe the use of ICT for political and democratic purposes in a regional community setting;
- Community development supports an understanding of community models.
- Critical social theory will allow issues of power and control to be privileged.
- ICT appears to have the potential support democratic re-engagement and to increase social capital at a community level.

## 4.2 Survey Instrument

This section describes the development and testing of the survey instrument, which was developed in order to gain a broad understanding of the use of ICT amongst people engaged in community activity (which includes voluntary community work, social and political

activism). The survey instrument was also intended to support the development of questions for Phase II of the study and to assist with participant selection. Broadly, the aims of this survey instrument were to discover what processes were used by individuals within a community for engagement, consultation and development between government, community and, if appropriate, businesses and the extent to which this is facilitated and influenced by the use of ICT.

The survey was developed in both online and paper-based versions. The online survey was developed using a commercial survey tool<sup>31</sup> and was accessible via a website using the domain name 'edemocracy.co.nz'. The website also provided background information on the research (electronic version of the participant information sheet). The hard-copy version of the survey instrument was available directly from the researcher (supplied with a postage-paid return envelope) or it could be downloaded from the website hosting the electronic survey.

This section describes the construction and testing of the survey instrument, incorporating the logical events suggested by Bouma (2000), namely:

- Defining the concepts of the research;
- Defining the variables to be collected;
- Identifying the instruments of measurement to be used; and
- For each measurement instrument, the unit of measurement.

There is a discussion on the construction of questions in the final version of the survey, followed by a description of the processes used to select participants and the strategies used to disseminate the request to participate in the survey. The three-stage approach used in testing the survey instrument to verify the development of individual questions, the survey instrument as a whole and, finally, there is an explanation and review of the pilot testing stage is described.



As Bouma (2000) observes, researchers in the natural sciences have at their disposal a set of generally accepted measurement units (for example, length can be measured in centimetres). Social science researchers, however, do not have this benefit. Much of the data collected through this survey instrument was qualitative, defining classes (or groups) of membership. No common agreement exists as to how common variables such as class, status or poverty are to be measured. In the context of this study, measurements of community or political activity, technological uptake or acumen must remain to some-degree subjective.

The use of the word 'measurement' can potentially generate confusion and misinterpretation, since the definition of this word implies some regular and established distance between objects within a class. This is a misnomer with regard to qualitative data (Wild & Seber, 1994). In order to manage and mitigate such potential issues, survey data was collected in a structured way. It was analysed and reported on using rigorously developed and clearly defined procedures. Being cognisant of the suggestions made by Converse and Presser (1986) and De Vaus (2003), consideration was given to the formation of survey questions with regard to their ability to answer the overall research question, focussing on descriptive research by clearly defining and articulating its context, which in this instance encapsulated:

- A time frame for the study that was the present.
- The geographical location of the survey was New Zealand.
- The survey is concerned with broad descriptions of ICT usage and community activity rather than to compare patterns.
- The survey topic was focussed on ICT use in the context of community and democratic practices.
- The survey was seeking to elicit opinion about the role of ICT and to then allow interpretation of current circumstances more than it sought to obtain statistical data.

Such a process is supported by Fowler (1995), who identifies five challenges to good survey questions:

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<sup>31</sup> Refer to [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com).

- Defining objectives and specifying appropriate answers.
- Ensuring that all respondents have a shared understanding of the meaning of questions (particularly key terms).
- Ensuring that people are asked questions to which they know the answers.
- Asking questions that respondents are able to answer in the terms required by the question.
- Asking questions respondents are willing to answer accurately (Fowler, 1995, p.9).

### 4.2.1 Survey Objectives

The survey instrument has been developed to directly address the following research questions:

- RQ1            What impact does ICT have on facilitating democratic processes?**
- SQ1.1        What is understood to be meant by the terms eDemocracy, eGovernment and eGovernance?
- SQ1.2        What processes exist for community engagement, consultation and development?
- SQ1.3        What motivates citizens to become involved in the democratic process?
- SQ1.4        What motivates participation in an eDemocracy process?
- SQ1.5        What factors influence and facilitate the adoption of ICT amongst those with an in interest in local democracy?
- SQ1.6        What is the basic social process influencing the adoption of eDemocracy practices?
- SQ1.7        What is the basic social process of enhanced civic participation through eDemocracy?

The objective of this phase of the research was to design a survey instrument to examine:

1. The terminology used by the participants in relation to ICT and democracy/government (SQ1.1, 1.5).

2. The usage of ICT by citizens and community groups in relation to democratic, political or government practices and processes (SQ1.5).
3. The processes of democracy and democratic engagement occurring amongst the participants (SQ1.2).
4. The social and cultural perceptions of and motivations to adopt ICT in general and in the context of engagement in democratic and government practices and processes (SQ1.6).
5. The barriers to ICT in general and in the context of engagement in democratic and government practices and processes (SQ1.5, 1.6).

Whilst the overall research was focused on the use of ICT within Waitakere City, this presented a challenge for the survey instrument. The spatial limitations of this study when combined with cultural limitations restricted the scope for recruiting sufficient local participants; Waitakere City only has a population of just under 190,000 people and, of these, only a small percentage can be expected to be either interested in or active in local democratic or community activities. Consider that Waitakere City Council's Annual Plan submission process received a total of 1,950 submissions (including 105 electronic submissions) for 2003/04. Only 193 people chose to speak to their submission at Council (McCleod, 2004). It is further noted that some potential participants might not wish to be involved in research beyond their existing (usually voluntary) commitment. To this end, the survey instrument was distributed nationally (throughout New Zealand) in an attempt to recruit a more significant and representative sample size (see Participant Recruitment below).

## 4.2.2 Survey Design

The variables for measurement were identified during the review of the literature (see Chapter 2) and through a process of observation of local democratic and CI projects. The survey instrument was initially divided into five main categories:

- Demographics
- Computer and internet usage

- Involvement in political and democratic practices
- Community activity
- Publishing online

After the first draft survey was tested (see Survey Testing below), these were reduced to four sections (with the community activity and publishing sections combined) and the demographic questions moved to the end of the survey, in line with the recommendation made by De Vaus (2003). Sections were renamed to ensure that headings were unambiguous and did not bias or confuse the respondent (particularly around the use of the word 'political'). The survey sections, discussed below, are:

- Section A – Your computer and internet use
- Section B – You and democracy
- Section C – Community activity
- Section D – About you

Within each section, questions were designed to elicit either an open or closed response, including both scales (time-based) and pre-coded responses – such as definitions of eDemocracy (De Vaus, 2003). Seventeen questions were designed to elicit subjective responses, seeking to gauge a respondent's perceptions or feelings about an issue or subject. These follow the guidelines promoted by Fowler (1995) for ensuring that subjective survey questions can provide consistent and meaningful responses, including:

- Consideration of what is being rated.
- The dimension or continuum the rated object is placed on.
- The characteristics of the dimension or continuum (Fowler, 1995, p.48).

The overall development of the survey instrument took place with due cognisance of Bouma's (2000) suggestions for eliciting factual responses, rather than opinion, from respondents, so that:

- Each question's relationship to the research question was verified.
- Questions were written in direct and simple language that was emotionally neutral, non-sexist and non-racist and in language designed not to irritate or offend a potential respondent.
- Demographic questions were relevant to the research and not simply collected out of interest.
- The structure of a question guided respondents towards providing a clear and simple response.
- The questions were relevant to the research participants.
- Where quantitative data was required in response to a question, specific values or ranges were offered to remove the risk of vague generic responses (such as 'a lot').
- Informalities and abbreviations (particularly technical ones) were avoided.
- Questions were designed to raise only a single issue.
- Questions were verified for hegemonic assumptions and to ensure that they did not repeat gender or cultural stereotypes. (Bouma, 2000, p. 69-71)

In developing the wording of individual questions, the following suggestions were taken into account:

- Language was simple and avoided jargon or technology terms where possible.
- Questions were kept as short as possible.
- Multiple questions within a single question were avoided (not double-barrelled).
- Questions were not leading and did not artificially create opinions.
- Questions avoided using negative wording, as this can be difficult to understand.
- Considered whether the respondent was likely to have sufficient knowledge?
- Considered whether the meaning of a question was clear and unambiguous?
- Avoided using questions that might encourage prestige bias (for example, linking a question to a famous person, brand or product).
- Considered whether a direct or indirect question was needed?
- Was the frame of reference for the question sufficiently clear?
- Was it preferable to use personal or impersonal wording?

- Subject matter was always listed before alternatives, such as frequency.
- Was the question likely to produce a response set affected by acquiescence or social desirability? (De Vaus, 1995, p.83-86)

#### 4.2.2.1 Validity

Validity is a critical consideration in choosing what variables are to be measured. It is important that, when measured, the variable adequately reflects a clear understanding of the concepts being researched. It is, therefore, vital that the appropriateness of all variables identified can be verified through a rigorous process of aligning them within understood theoretical concepts (Bouma, 2000). In the design of the survey instrument for this research, it was important to ensure that the data collected reflected the specific concepts of CI, democratic participation and technology usage that were being researched. A process of construct validity, where question construction was compared to the research question and sub-questions and to the literature, was used to align the objectives of the research to the survey instrument, thus ensuring that data obtained from the questions was able to answer the research question.

Issues of validity inevitable arise in the design of a survey instrument, because the act of choosing variables involves finding a concrete expression to represent what is most often an abstract or conceptual idea. It is also important to recognize that not everyone will agree with the choice of variables made, further reason why rigorous research includes a comprehensive description of the variables and the justification for the selection, including an explanation of their validity (Bouma, 2000).

Construct validity can be deconstructed into two sub-categories: Convergent and discriminate validity. Convergent validity refers to the general agreement among ratings that have been independently collected where measures can be theoretically related. Discriminate validity describes a lack of relationship among measures which theoretically should not be related. Therefore, in determining that the survey instrument demonstrates construct validity, the following process, derived from Carmines and Zeller (1979), was used:

- Theoretical relationships were defined and specified.

- Empirical relationships between different measures of the concepts were examined.
- Empirical evidence was interpreted as to how it clarifies the construct validity of the particular measure being tested.
- Issues of validity testing were considered, including the multi-dimensional nature of concepts, meaning that they cannot be adequately collected and, therefore, a 'least inadequate' variable can be identified with them.

The next four sections of this chapter will discuss the four parts of the survey instrument in detail. It will align each section with the appropriate research sub-questions and identify the aim and intention of that particular section. The individual questions that make up each section of the survey instrument are then discussed.

#### **4.2.2.2 Section A – Your computer and internet use**

This section of the survey focused on gaining information from respondents about how, where, why and how often they use computers and the internet. These questions were targeted at answering research question 1 in general and sub-question 1.5 in particular, when linked to the responses in the Political Activity section:

SQ1.5      What factors influence and facilitate the adoption of ICT amongst those with an in interest in local democracy?

As a result of pilot testing, a number of questions were revised and some merged. There were originally five questions developed to discover what technology was being used, where and how often:

- *Do you use a computer for (tick all that apply)?*
- *Do you use email for (tick all that apply)?*
- *Do you use the internet for (tick all that apply)?*
- *Do you use a cellular (mobile) phone for (tick all that apply)?*
- *Where (and how often) do you access the internet and/or email?*

These were simplified and refined into a single question:

- *Where (and how often) do you access the internet (and/or email)?*

The first version of the survey contained a question aimed at identifying barriers to greater internet uptake:

- *What prevents respondents from using the internet (or using it more)?*

The language in this question was considered to be too negative by the researcher (and was discussed with pilot testing respondents who concurred). Following the recommendations made by De Vaus (2003), the wording was reversed to be more positive:

- *What might encourage you to use the internet more?*

The initial questions and related comments in this section of the survey were:

Question	Commentary/Variables
Where (and how often) do you access the internet (and/or email)?	<p>This question is aimed at identifying the breadth of technology usage across a range of typical roles, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Home</li> <li>▪ Work</li> <li>▪ School/Tertiary institute</li> <li>▪ Cybercafé</li> <li>▪ Library/Community centre</li> <li>▪ Mobile device</li> </ul> <p>And frequency of that usage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Daily</li> <li>▪ Weekly</li> <li>▪ Monthly</li> <li>▪ Now and then</li> <li>▪ Never</li> </ul> <p>Note that for some, multiple selections might refer to the same physical location (for example, people who work at home might tick both ‘home’ and ‘work’ but mean only a single location (or computer); educators might consider ‘work’ and ‘education’ to be the same). This does not present a problem for data analysis since it is the intent and purpose of use that is sought here as much as the location.</p>
Which statement best describes your use of new technology?	This is a calibrating question to enable respondent to self-declare their own rating. It can be linked directly to adoption models (Such as: Hartman, Sifonis, & Kador, 2000; Moore, 1999). Options provided are:



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I buy new technologies as soon as they become available.</li> <li>▪ I'll get it once I can see that it will be useful.</li> <li>▪ I'll get it once it is used by a lot of people.</li> <li>▪ I avoid buying technology products.</li> </ul>
What best describes your use of computers?	<p>Participants were asked to self-determine their own level of expertise. Like the question above on technology adoption, this question is at risk of social-desirability bias. As Fisher and Katz (1999) observe value self-reporting is affected by cultural values and values considered to be most important are most likely to be subject to bias, therefore risk of bias is considered high for these questions given that the study is about perceptions and use of ICT.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I'm an expert user</li> <li>▪ I'm experienced user</li> <li>▪ I'm not very experienced</li> <li>▪ I don't use them at all</li> </ul>
How long have respondents been using computers and the internet?	Ask respondents to list the year that they a) first used a computer and b) first used the internet.
What might encourage participants to use the internet more?	<p>This question will provide an indication about barriers, options provided are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ When it costs less to use</li> <li>▪ When access is easier</li> <li>▪ It was less complicated to use</li> <li>▪ My information was more secure</li> <li>▪ I understood computers better</li> <li>▪ When there is less threat of viruses on my computer</li> <li>▪ I'm using it enough</li> <li>▪ Other (specify)</li> </ul>

The next set of questions gauges a respondent's general usage characteristics when online. The first draft of the survey provided four questions. The first two related to the types of websites visited (focussed on the site itself) and the purpose in visiting sites (focussed on motivation for use); the third question focussed on the favoured method of finding information (such as search engines or portals); and the fourth question was a value question to determine whether the respondent felt that using the internet kept them better informed.

- *What kinds of websites do you visit?*
- *What do you use the internet for?*
- *How do you find information on the internet?*
- *Do you think that the internet helps you to be better informed about the things that you are interested in?*

Feedback in testing the survey instrument indicated that this construction was too complex. These questions were, therefore, simplified in the second version of the survey to a single question, replacing the first two with a matrix response based on the nature of usage and frequency. The third question was removed as testing responses showed that it could be confusing (a lack of lay understanding of differences between ‘search engine’ and a ‘portal’, for example). The fourth question has been retained. ‘To access to government services’ was added in the final version of the survey.

Question	Commentary/Variables
How often do you use the internet?	<p>Categories for this question were drawn from literature reporting surveys of community internet usage (such as Katz &amp; Rice, 2002; Tharp, 2004):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To keep informed/up to date</li> <li>▪ To do research</li> <li>▪ For education</li> <li>▪ To find health/medical information</li> <li>▪ To find out about my community</li> <li>▪ To access government services</li> <li>▪ To communicate with others</li> <li>▪ To support hobbies/interests</li> <li>▪ To buy products or services</li> <li>▪ To pay bills</li> <li>▪ To book travel and accommodation</li> <li>▪ To do my banking</li> <li>▪ For entertainment</li> <li>▪ To play online games</li> <li>▪ For entertainment</li> <li>▪ To support hobbies/interests</li> <li>▪ To play online games</li> </ul> <p>And the frequency ranges provided as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Daily</li> <li>▪ Weekly</li> <li>▪ Monthly</li> <li>▪ Now and then</li> <li>▪ Never</li> </ul>
Does the internet helps keep you informed?	<p>The final question in this group asks respondents to self-define the value of the internet with regard to general interests (identified above). They can choose from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Helps a lot</li> <li>▪ Helps somewhat</li> <li>▪ Makes no difference</li> <li>▪ Doesn't help at all</li> </ul>

### 4.2.2.3 Section B – You and Democracy

This section of the survey was designed to obtain information on participant’s general involvement in political and democratic life as well as the role that new technologies played in this. It was targeted at providing initial data towards answering the following research questions, which are explored further in the second phase of participant interviews:

- SQ1.1 What is understood to be meant by the terms eDemocracy, eGovernment and eGovernance?
- SQ1.2 What processes exist for community engagement, consultation and development?
- SQ1.3 What motivates citizens to become involved in the democratic process?
- SQ1.4 What motivates participation in an eDemocracy process?
- SQ1.7 What is the basic social process of enhanced civic participation through eDemocracy?

The first set of questions were designed to identify the respondent’s level of political awareness and activity involvement in a range of political and democratic processes, ranging from voting to standing for political office:

Question	Commentary/Variables
Do you believe the statement “whatever I say or do, I can’t influence government”?	<p>This first question relates to attitudinal trends towards political involvement, trust in political institutions, actors and processes. Commentators observe changing levels of trust and participation in social, community and democratic processes (S. Coleman &amp; Götze, 2002; Putnam, 2000). Commentators such as Coleman argue that participation is falling across the board, whereas others, such as Norris (2002) say political involvement is either stable or increasing. Beyond simple levels of participation, Coleman (2004b) argues that there has been a collapse in public efficacy. Coleman suggest that the question indicated here was commonly used since the 1960s and that “from the mid-60s to the mid-70s, something like thirty per cent of the North American and the European populations agreed with that statement. Over the last ten years consistently in opinion polls, between seventy and eighty per cent of people agree with that statement.” (p.6).</p> <p>The question will allow respondents to indicate: Yes, somewhat or no in response. Understanding of this question was explored during the pilot testing stage and none of the respondents indicated that they were confused by the wording.</p>
How would you describe your general awareness of political issues?	Enables participants to self-define their own level of political awareness, noting potential risk for social-desirability bias (Fisher & Katz, 1999). The perceived level of political awareness is important for calibrating the self-defined impact of the internet on a respondent’s political awareness.

	<p>Respondents can select from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Very aware</li> <li>▪ Somewhat aware</li> <li>▪ Not very aware</li> <li>▪ No awareness at all</li> </ul>
<p>Activities relating to politics, political action and democratic practices in the last three years.</p>	<p>This question gauges the nature of respondent’s political involvement and democratic activity. The timeframe used is the maximum cycle for general and local elections in New Zealand, which are held every three years. Note that in New Zealand, although registering to vote is mandatory, voting is not.</p> <p>The questions include implication of varying levels of political interest and commitment, ranging from voting (requires low levels of commitment and interest) to standing for office (requires high levels of commitment and interest). The options include:</p> <p><b>Low</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Vote in a local election (can be compared against voter turnout records).</li> <li>▪ Vote in a national election (can be compared against voter turnout records).</li> <li>▪ Follow a political issue or debate in the media.</li> <li>▪ Discuss politics with friends, family or colleagues.</li> </ul> <p><b>Medium</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attend a political meeting.</li> <li>▪ Attend a formal meeting of elected representatives (such as a council meeting or select committee).</li> <li>▪ Visit a political party’s website.</li> </ul> <p><b>High</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Join (or renew membership) of a political party.</li> <li>▪ Actively canvas on behalf of a political party or candidate.</li> <li>▪ Stand for political office.</li> </ul>

The second group of questions in this section were designed to obtain information on contact with elected representatives and council or government agencies. These questions attempted to gauge a participant’s level of activity in and knowledge of democratic processes. This included establishing whether they took part in various consultation processes, such as Annual Plans, Long Term Strategic Plans, Council committees (local government), Consultations and Select Committees (central government).

The questions referring to the making of submissions to government differentiate between a written and a verbal submission. The assumption being that the verbal submission would be supported by a written submission but implied that this approach demonstrated more intent on the part of the submitter. For each of these questions, where a respondent answered in the affirmative, a secondary question was used to determine whether they used electronic means to make a submission and, if so, what method was used and, if not, why not:

Question	Commentary/Variables
How many times did you contact an elected representative about a community issue in the last year?	<p>Responses can be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ None</li> <li>▪ 1 or 2 times</li> <li>▪ 3 to 5 times</li> <li>▪ 6 or more times</li> </ul>
Have you made a submission?	<p>Two questions ask whether the respondent has made a submission to a local (city, district or regional) council in the last 12 months and/or to a central government consultation committee or project in the last 12 months. Responses can be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No</li> <li>▪ Yes; In writing</li> <li>▪ Yes; In person</li> </ul>
If answered yes to the above questions, was an electronic submission made?	<p>The allowable responses assume that more than one submission could have been made so allow respondent to make multiple selections (not interested in number of submissions, simply the methods used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No; it wasn't available</li> <li>▪ No; I chose not to</li> <li>▪ Yes; by email</li> <li>▪ Yes; via a webform</li> <li>▪ Yes; via SMS/Text messaging</li> </ul>

The third group of questions related specifically to how involvement in democratic processes had extended to encapsulate the use of ICT. The first two questions, relating to the use of internet-based communication tools were revised following testing to extend the definition from 'politics' to 'government or politics' and a range of different communication media have been added. Consideration was given in developing these questions to recent New Zealand and US surveys on how citizens access government services (Curtis, Vowles, & Curtis, 2004; Horrigan, 2004), although this research project is only interested in the online components of access.

Question	Commentary/Variables
Use of internet-based communication tools.	<p>These questions asks for a Yes/No response as to which electronic tools sources respondents have used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Find out about government or politics.</li> <li>▪ Make comments about government and politics.</li> </ul> <p>Using any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Websites</li> <li>▪ Internet newsgroups (such as nz.soc.politics)</li> <li>▪ Internet based discussion forum</li> <li>▪ Weblog (Blog)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Online chat</li> <li>▪ Email newsletter</li> <li>▪ Email discussion list</li> <li>▪ Other (specify)</li> </ul>
How has your use of the internet affected your awareness of topical issues?	<p>This question gauges what impact the internet has had on awareness of political issues. It must be analysed in conjunction with the question above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Made me much more aware</li> <li>▪ Made me somewhat more aware</li> <li>▪ No difference</li> <li>▪ Made me less aware</li> </ul>
Has your use of the internet affected your level of involvement in political activities?	<p>This question attempted to determine whether use of the internet has changed a respondent's level of political activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased it a lot</li> <li>▪ Increased it somewhat</li> <li>▪ Made no difference</li> <li>▪ Reduced it</li> </ul>
Does the internet help you to influence key decision-makers?	<p>This question attempted to gain an understanding of whether being online has made it easier or harder for participants to influence decision-makers. The response to this question can be analysed alongside responses to the first question in this section ("whatever I say or do, I can't influence government"?). Possible response included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Helps a lot</li> <li>▪ Helps somewhat</li> <li>▪ No difference</li> <li>▪ Doesn't help at all</li> </ul>

The final questions in this group related to the respondent's definition of eDemocracy. These were considered carefully by the researcher and principal supervisor and not included in the first draft of the survey. Rather, respondents to the first draft were used to identify ways to engage future respondents with such a question without it being either leading or confusing. As anticipated, unfamiliarity with term 'eDemocracy' was expressed by some participants in the pilot testing stage. However, the majority of respondents seemed comfortable constructing their own definition and meaningful data was obtained from the pilot study.

The issue of definition raised a number of concerns for the researcher, since this is an emerging field and, as Coleman (2004b) observes, eDemocracy is a contestable discourse<sup>32</sup>. However, in consideration of Coleman's warning, and with regard to ensuring that problems do not arise in interpreting the meaning associated with participant responses (De Vaus, 2003), two questions were developed. The first provided respondents with a list of possible

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<sup>32</sup> This is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

components that *might* be considered to make up an eDemocracy process and the second was an open question that had been developed to obtain a subjective definition of eDemocracy.

An additional response was added following the pilot study: ‘Accessing a government service online’. Based on the discussion in the Literature Review chapter, this was seen by the researcher as an aspect ‘eGovernment’ rather than ‘eDemocracy’.

Question	Commentary/Variables
What do you think eDemocracy involves?	Respondents can select Yes, No or ‘Not sure’ as valid responses to the following list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Online voting</li> <li>▪ Emailing politicians</li> <li>▪ Emailing government/council officials</li> <li>▪ Discussing issues with others online or by email</li> <li>▪ Making submissions</li> <li>▪ Reading submissions others have made</li> <li>▪ Reviewing policy documents</li> <li>▪ Being informed through access to information and archives</li> <li>▪ Accessing a government service online</li> <li>▪ Improving access to information</li> <li>▪ Ensuring equal access to computers and the internet</li> <li>▪ Influencing decisions that affect your community</li> </ul>
What else does eDemocracy involve (please state in your own words)?	This is a free-form text field to capture any other definitions that the respondent might have. Note that this is maintained as a separate question for technical reasons (the online survey does not allow the option of a user-specifiable ‘other’ field attached to a matrix response, such as the question above).

#### 4.2.2.4 Section C – Community Activity

This section broadly informs Research Question 1 by identifying levels of community involvement and social capital and the role that ICT plays in a respondent’s community activity. Specifically this section addresses:

SQ1.6      What is the basic social process influencing the adoption of eDemocracy practices?

And will inform:

- SQ1.1 What is understood to be meant by the terms eDemocracy, eGovernment and eGovernance?
- SQ1.3 What motivates citizens to become involved in the democratic process?
- SQ1.4 What motivates participation in an eDemocracy process?
- SQ1.7 What is the basic social process of enhanced civic participation through eDemocracy?

Two questions were initially developed in order to measure social capital and were designed to determine whether respondents considered themselves a member of one or more 'community' and, if so, to what extent they considered themselves to be active in those communities.

- *Do you consider yourself to be a part of a local community?*
- *Are you active volunteering in that community?*

Initially, these questions were phrased to use the term 'local community', however, feedback from respondents during testing indicated that this was potentially confusing. For example, one respondent indicated that, whilst they considered themselves a part of their local community, they did not volunteer in it. However, they did volunteer in other 'communities'. Another respondent noted in a similar vein that they were active in ethnic and special-interest communities, seeing the questions as referring to a geographical based community.

After initial testing, a definition of 'community' was added. However, this did not prove entirely sufficient to address the matter of understanding. Three survey participants in particular experienced problems with the definition (or lack of) whilst being cognisant of their own unease at defining what a community might be. These challenges were investigated through a process of conversation (both face-to-face and email) and finally an open response was developed that allowed respondents to define the communities that they consider they belonged to.



Following the questionnaire development stage, a review of survey-based research in CI (such as Tharp, 2004) was carried out to assist in defining these questions. The result, which was verified in the pilot testing stage was to simplify the use of the term 'community' such that it became self-defining for the participant and to include questions that could be used to gauge social capital. The questions were:

- *Do you consider yourself to be a member of a community?*
- *What communities do you belong to?*
- *In what ways are you active in these communities?*
- *Have you helped establish a community group?*
- *In the last month, how often have you visited or contacted your neighbours or nearby friends?*
- *How many hours do you volunteer in community activities each month?*

The questions related to community were:

Question	Commentary/Variables
Are you a member of one or more communities?	Appropriate responses to this question are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Yes</li> <li>▪ No</li> </ul>
What communities do you belong to?	A free-text response. This allows respondents to define community for themselves but for the researcher to identify the communities that the respondent feels that they belong to, thereby qualifying the answer above.
In what ways are you active in these communities?	Free-text response.

The next set of three questions relate to social capital (Performance and Innovation Unit, 2002; Putnam, 2000):

Question	Commentary/Variables
Have you helped establish a community group?	Possible responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Yes</li> <li>▪ No</li> </ul>
How often do you participate in community activities?	Possible responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rarely or never</li> <li>▪ Once a month</li> <li>▪ 2-3 times a month</li> <li>▪ Weekly</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ More than weekly</li> </ul>
In the last month, how often have you visited or contacted your neighbours or nearby friends?	<p>Possible responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ None</li> <li>▪ 1 or 2 times</li> <li>▪ 3 to 5 times</li> <li>▪ 6 or more times</li> </ul>

The third grouping uses questions that relate to the respondents use of ICT in their community activities. Stern and Dillman (2006) have suggested that having access to the internet access will increase topical networking and positively impact on local community membership. This section incorporates questions relating to the use of the internet for publishing that were originally included in a separate section in the first draft of the survey.

Question	Commentary/Variables
What community activities have you used the internet for?	<p>This question is intended to identify the level of internet activity relating to community and voluntary activities. The question will determine whether respondents have used the internet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Daily</li> <li>▪ Weekly</li> <li>▪ Monthly</li> <li>▪ Now and then</li> <li>▪ Never</li> </ul> <p>To engage in any of the following community based activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Visit a similar community's website?</li> <li>▪ Visit a local government website?</li> <li>▪ Visit a central government website?</li> <li>▪ To research an issue?</li> <li>▪ Look for information on funding?</li> <li>▪ Contact the media about an issue or event?</li> <li>▪ Publish information about your community on a website?</li> <li>▪ Promote a community issue or event.</li> <li>▪ Present a view that challenges a council/government statement or policy?</li> <li>▪ Plan or manage activities in your community?</li> </ul> <p>A second, free-form, question follows this to ask for any additional Uses of the internet in relation to community activity.</p>
Do you consider yourself to be a member of an online community?	<p>Possible responses are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Yes</li> <li>▪ No</li> </ul> <p>If respondents answer yes, a supplementary question is asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What benefits do you feel you get from belonging to an online community?</li> </ul>
Have you developed a	This question was designed to find out how many respondents had become

website for a community organisation?	publishers of information via a website. It can be analysed against usage patterns, perceived knowledge and uptake of ICT to determine the characteristics of such a user.
What would encourage you to use the internet more to publish information about your community or a voluntary organisation that you're involved with?	<p>Although this question is designed to identify barriers to greater internet use, it has been re-worded in to the positive in line with De Vaus' suggestion (2003), Respondents are asked to select all that apply from the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Easier access</li> <li>▪ Lower cost (of access)</li> <li>▪ Lower cost (of publishing, such as hosting a website)</li> <li>▪ Having more computer skills</li> <li>▪ Able to see more value</li> <li>▪ Having more time</li> <li>▪ I'm using it as much as I need to</li> <li>▪ Other (please specify)</li> </ul>

#### 4.2.2.5 Section D – Demographics: About you

Questions in this section were designed to gather demographic and personal information that would allow the survey sample to be compared and contrasted with other surveys and census information collected in New Zealand. To this end, the survey design has followed the suggestions provided by Statistics New Zealand (2002a) and groupings within multiple choice questions mirror the structure used in the New Zealand Census. For example, ethnicity was offered as a multiple-selection field so that respondents were able to self-identify with more than one ethnic background.

The demographics section was moved to the end of the survey following completion of testing of the first draft survey, which is consistent with the recommendation made by De Vaus (2003), who suggests that placing personal questions at the beginning of a survey can increase the chance of survey fatigue.

The first two questions were primarily intended to validate potential participants for Phase II of the research; respondents who indicate a willingness to participate in the Phase II of the research must live and/or work in Waitakere City. They also permit a stratified sample to be generated from the results, based on location.

Question	Commentary/Variables
Where does respondent live?	Free text response. Can be used to group responses by location, to identify respondents who are outside New Zealand (and therefore ineligible to respond to the survey).
Where does respondent	Free text response. Could be the same as above. Note addition of 'mostly'

mostly work?	as testing shows people work in multiple locations (including at home).
Age	Based on the New Zealand Census age bands: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 18-24</li> <li>▪ 25-39</li> <li>▪ 40-54</li> <li>▪ 54-64</li> <li>▪ &gt; 64</li> </ul>
Gender	Male, Female
Ethnicity	<p>Ethnicity descriptions have been derived from the New Zealand Census (Statistics New Zealand, 2002a) and use a mixture of Level 1 and Level 2 codes (level 2 for larger populations, such as Pacific Island groups, Level 1 is satisfactory for smaller groups, such as 'Middle Eastern').</p> <p>The question has been designed to measure ethnicity based on multiple self-describing cultural affiliations and the field will allow for multiple selections (for example, a participant can self-select to identify their ethnicity as, Pākehā and Māori or Samoan and Niuean). The 'not stated' option will be provided as an explicit option to increase the comfort level of respondents who might find the question difficult to answer, offensive or otherwise are unwilling to respond.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New Zealand/Pākehā</li> <li>▪ Māori</li> <li>▪ European</li> <li>▪ Samoan</li> <li>▪ Cook Island Māori</li> <li>▪ Tongan</li> <li>▪ Niuean</li> <li>▪ Tokelauan</li> <li>▪ Fijian</li> <li>▪ Other Pacific Island</li> <li>▪ South East Asian</li> <li>▪ Indian</li> <li>▪ Chinese</li> <li>▪ Other Asian</li> <li>▪ African</li> <li>▪ Middle Eastern</li> <li>▪ Latin American</li> <li>▪ Not stated</li> <li>▪ Other (specify)</li> </ul>
Primary occupation?	This question is intended to assist in identifying those who are primarily employed in public service or political fields, who have professional roles involving technology or are involved professionally in the community and voluntary sector. Because the question is open, it will allow respondents to self-define and includes the opportunity to identify those not in paid work, students and retirees.

Early testing showed that a number of demographic questions did not assist in directly answering the research questions and the following items were removed:

- Household income.
- Highest level of education.

- Primary method of travel to/from work.

In addition, a question seeking information on the nature of work (allowing for multiple constructions and portfolio employment) was considered too complicated and unlikely to yield usable results and was simplified to 'primary occupation'.

## 4.3 Testing and Evaluation

As De Vaus (2003) explains, data collection can occur at either the starting point in the process of theory generation (inductive) or at the end (deductive). Since this research is inductive, the survey was designed to generate a data set that could be analyzed and interpreted to assist in the development of the interview questions. Extensive testing of the survey took place prior to its final release. According to Fowler (1995), the empirical evaluation of a survey instrument is a critical part of the design stage and a growing emphasis on evaluating survey instruments prior to their application has emerged. The development and testing of the survey instrument followed the recommendations made by Converse and Presser (1986) and the three-stage pilot testing process suggested by De Vaus:

- Stage 1 – Question development
- Stage 2 – Questionnaire development
- Stage 3 – Polishing pilot test (De Vaus, 1995, p.99)

These stages are described below.

### 4.3.1 Question Development

An initial set of 54 survey questions were generated by the researcher, drawing on a variety of sources. These included previous surveys on social and community use of the internet (Katz & Rice, 2002; Tharp, 2004; UCLA Center for Communications Policy, 2003), recent surveys relating to how citizens access government services (Curtis, Vowles, & Curtis, 2004; Horrigan, 2004; UK Online, 2003) and definitions and question structures used in the 2001 New Zealand Census (Statistics New Zealand, 2002a). As the literature indicated, the

number of questions was reduced throughout the testing stage as questions were deemed redundant (they did not directly contribute to answering the research question) or were refined and combined (Converse & Presser, 1986; De Vaus, 2003).

Table 3: Number of questions at different stages of survey development.

Stage		N=
1	Question development stage	54
2	Questionnaire development stage	45
3	Pilot testing stage	41
	Final survey	41

This first stage involved the definition of logical groupings, individual questions and the identification of appropriate variables. A group of five testers was recruited for this purpose, testing both the online and hard copy versions of the survey for accuracy, legibility, phrasing and appropriateness of the responses suggested. Participants for this stage were drawn from a range of skills and included people active in the community/voluntary sector, differing levels of ICT knowledge and some with research and evaluation experience (to be more critical in testing the survey construction):

Table 4: Experience matrix for stage 1 of survey testing (n=5).

Respondent	Community Involvement	ICT skills	Research skills
1	High	Medium	High
2	Medium	Low	Medium
3	Medium	Medium	High
4	Medium	High	Medium
5	High	High	High

Initial testing from this sub-group resulted in a number of changes to the structure and the nature of questions. Specifically, issues were identified around wording for terms such as 'community'. These changes were reflected in a revised version of the survey which was developed for stage 2 of the testing. A number of questions were merged and, where questions failed to yield responses that informed the research question, they were removed.

### 4.3.2 Questionnaire Development

This stage of testing focused on testing the survey instrument in a complete but draft form.

In addition to an analysis of the recorded survey responses and comments made by testers on the survey forms, respondents were also asked open ended questions relating to the study and clarification was sought relating to any issues raised. Test participants were selected from the researcher's existing networks. They were drawn from a range of backgrounds that were considered to be representative of the sample demographic for the full survey, plus some who had knowledge and skills in the design of research (again, to assist the researcher by offering a more critical and independent evaluation of the survey). Specifically, this stage of the testing sought to include respondents who:

- Were involved in community activity (which could include local or topical);
- Not currently involved in community activity (or very limited involvement);
- Had differing levels of ICT awareness and skills;
- Were either primarily situated within communities (and outside government), local government officers and elected representatives; and
- Had experience in research and survey development.

Table 5: Participants for stage 2 of survey testing (n=10).

Respondent	Community Involvement	ICT level	Role	Research skills	Survey method
1	High	High	Citizen	High	Online & Print
2	Low	High	Citizen	High	Online & Print
3	High	High	Elected rep	Low	Online
4	Low	Low	Council officer	High	Online
5	High	High	Citizen	Medium	Online
6	Medium	Medium	Council officer	Medium	Online
7	High	Medium	Citizen	Low	Online & Print
8	Low	Low	Citizen	Low	Online
9	High	High	Citizen	High	Online
10	Medium	Low	Citizen	Medium	Print

Feedback from both the electronic and paper based survey testing showed that the level of language used was appropriate and not too technical for the respondents. In particular, testing by low ICT users showed that the survey language was easy and appropriate for them to follow, even in the sections where technology was discussed. The testing also revealed that, as De Vaus (2003) suggests is often the case, there were too many questions in the early draft. It manifested by respondents indicating some duplication or perceived

closeness between questions. The number of questions was reduced from 54 to 45 for stage 2 of testing through a process of rigorously comparing the question and test results to the specific research question(s) that they were intended to answer and then deleting extraneous questions and combining others.

One participant observed that the survey response time was slow over a dial-up connection. This might have been perception or a particularly poor dial-up connection as the survey was tested extensively by the researcher using a dial-connection and it performed adequately. With this in mind, consideration was given to the size of individual pages as well as the overall length of the survey.

The draft version of the survey used for Stage 2 contained ten printed pages (three of these were informational, containing the participant information sheet and consent form). The online survey consisted of eight web pages (excluding a 'thank you' page that the visitor was redirected to after completing the survey). Whilst the number of pages was reduced in the final version (to eight printed and seven online pages), consideration was given in testing to survey fatigue. In particular, as a result of this testing stage, the demographics section was moved to the end of the survey.

The frequency of responses developed in the initial questions was subjective. A frequency scale was developed asking respondents to indicate 'often', 'sometimes' or 'never'. However, this was felt to be too subjective and open to the interpretation of the respondent. These questions were revised to consistently offer a scaled response that included: Daily, weekly, monthly, now and then and never.

Questions relating to the use of ICT were considered by the researcher and one test respondent to be potentially challenging to answer if a respondent worked at home (the survey asked if you use computers, internet and email at home and at work). Because this applied to a relatively small group and, although there was a small risk that this group could be over-represented in the survey, no change was made.



Some respondents observed that the order of some lists of valid answers appeared to be out of order in the online survey for some questions. The randomisation was intentional and a feature of the survey software, intended to reduce the risk of respondents simply clicking through the same answer without reading them.

### 4.3.3 Pilot Testing

The number of questions was further reduced from 45 to 41 and a pilot test, or pre-test, stage used to validate the wording, meaning and order of questions and the appropriateness of the overall layout and timing. The pilot test procedure was developed from recommendations proposed by Converse and Presser (1986) and De Vaus (2003). For individual questions this included verifying that:

- There were suitable levels of variation in responses
- Meaning was understood by respondents
- Any redundant questions were removed
- Questions with scalable responses scaled correctly
- Questions that illicit high non-response rates were identified
- Questions that lead to an acquiescence response set were identified

The pilot test also explored the appropriateness of the survey layout for the user and the time taken for its completion, including:

- Flow of questions was appropriate and logical
- Transitions between sections was smooth
- Skip patterns, where used, were correct
- Timing estimates were realistic
- Respondent interest and attention was maintained

A secondary survey instrument was developed containing questions to obtain partial data on the above (the remaining data is drawn from an analysis of responses to the pilot survey).

Paper-based and online versions were used to mirror the primary survey instrument.

For the pilot test stage, participant selection criteria similar to those used in the second stage of testing were used, however the testing cohort was enlarged to 22. Ten participants were asked to complete the paper-based survey and twelve the online version. Participants were selected based on a range of criteria:

- Level of involvement in community activity (from extensive to little or none);
- Level of ICT awareness and skills (from extensive to none or very basic);
- Level of political activity (from elected representative to dis-interested);
- Some participants were further selected because they had a knowledge of research practices; and
- Consideration was given not to select participants who might not feel motivated to complete the full survey post-development.

**Table 6: Experience matrix for the pilot testing of the survey (n=22).**

	High	Medium	Low
Community Involvement	5	10	7
ICT skill level	10	10	2
Political activity	3	9	10
Research experience	5	5	12

A total of 16 responses were received over a six-week period, six paper-based and ten electronic. The survey responses were followed up by informal email or face-to-face interviews, which were used to confirm responses that were given and to explore issues identified by the respondents and other respondents in more detail.

An estimate of the actual time required to complete each section of the survey estimate was derived from development testing and from the two prior testing stages. These timings were presented to pilot test respondents along with space to provide actual times taken. Pilot test respondents were asked to record their times for each section to assess the accuracy of this estimate:

Table 7: Survey response times (n=16).

Section	Estimate (minutes)	Average time actually taken
Read information sheet and complete consent form	5.00	3.30
Section A – Your computer and internet use	3.00	3.80
Section B – You and democracy	5.00	4.30
Section C – Community activity	5.00	3.80
Section D – About you	3.00	1.80
<b>Total time taken</b>	<b>21 minutes</b>	<b>17 minutes</b>

There was no significant difference in time taken between those who completed the paper-based survey and those who completed it online. The paper-based surveys took on average one minute longer to complete; however, these were all within the estimated time. All respondents considered the time taken appropriate and none felt that the survey was too long. Although, two respondents noted that they would have started to lose interest or concentration had it been any longer.

A question was included to gauge the respondent's preference for completing an online or hardcopy version of the survey. The question was different depending on the version of the survey tested.

Table 8: Online versus hardcopy preferences (n=16).

		Yes	No
For online respondents:	Would you have preferred to complete the printed (hard copy) version of the survey?	1	9
For hardcopy respondents:	Would you have preferred to complete the online (electronic) version of the survey?	5	1

The responses clearly show that pilot test respondents had a preference for the online survey.

Questions were developed to help identify missing or insufficient information, to determine the appropriateness of language, flow and the questions themselves. The responses below indicate that the survey was well designed and appropriate for its purpose:

Table 9: Summary of pilot testing question responses (n=16).

Question	Yes	No
Was sufficient information provided for you to understand the purpose of the survey?	16	0
Were you given sufficient information to complete the survey?	15	1
Was the level and style of language appropriate?	15	1
Were there any words, terms or phrases that you did not understand (and were not explained)?	5	11
Were there any questions that you did not understand (if not, why)?	0	16
Were any questions ambiguous or confusing (if so, why)?	4	12
Where options (such as scales) were provided, were these appropriate (if not, why not)?	8	8
Did you have difficulty answering any questions?	3	13

Where an issue or problem was indicated, space was available to allow the respondent to supply question numbers and to make comments. These are discussed below.

With regard to terminology, there were no unexpected responses. Most issues related to the definition of words such as 'community', 'eDemocracy' and whether the term 'internet' included email (the definition provided clearly stated that it did). Three respondents had difficulty with the term 'eDemocracy', not surprising given the prominence of this term in the survey and its relative newness and it was of interest since a purpose of this survey instrument is to gauge perceptions of what the term means to individuals.

A second term causing confusion for two respondents was the difference between the 'internet' and 'Email'. One participant suggested combining these terms whenever they were used to avoid confusion. However a more pragmatic response might have been to follow the suggestion of another respondent to ensure that definitions were repeated at the top of each page as appropriate. This was particularly appropriate for the online version where respondents were unable to easily return to the definition page mid-way through the survey.

The definition of community, which proved problematic in earlier versions, did not present any obstacles or cause any confusion in the pilot testing. One respondent questioned whether professional associations or professional colleagues amounted to a community and listed such in their response to the question asking to what communities they belonged. This response demonstrated the value of self-definition, since that respondent obviously felt that

their membership of a particular professional group amounted to belonging to a community. However, the researcher was able to exercise some caution in interpreting this response given the commercial imperative underlying the construction of this so-called community (Bauman, 2000; Manion & Bartholomew, 2004).

One respondent suggested that the term 'National government' could be confused with a National Party-led government and was addressed by use of the term 'Central Government' in the final version of the survey.

As in the earlier testing stage, two respondents noted that some responses in the online survey appeared to be out of order. The sequencing was intentional and designed to ensure that the respondent was engaging with the potential answers (De Vaus, 2003; Fowler, 1995). Two respondents suggested the addition of 'red herrings', particularly around the definition of eDemocracy. The final version included 'Access to government services', which is a component of eGovernment rather than eDemocracy *per se* to address this.

Two questions allowed respondents to state whether they had other questions that might be asked and also to make general comments on the survey instrument:

#### What questions would you ask that weren't asked here?

Issue raised	Resolution
I would ask something to get general level of engagement - school boards etc.	Incorporated through the provision of self-defining community membership.
Accessing government services: Did you know you could use internet for this? Have you used the internet to access govt services?	'Access to government services' has been added as a category for both general and community internet use and into the definitions of eDemocracy.

#### Any other comments?

Issue raised	Resolution
Comments in this field were entirely favourable towards the design and support of the intent of the study.	No action required.

In conclusion, the pilot testing stage provided sufficient high quality feedback to satisfy the researcher that the survey was appropriate and that subject to some minor amendments as described in the survey design section above, it was appropriate for this research.

## 4.4 Limitations of the Survey

The testing showed that survey instrument was an appropriate method for gathering data relating to questions and concepts that were well or reasonably well understood by the respondents. However, problems could arise when attempting to collect data where concepts are poorly understood, if at all (De Vaus, 2003; Fowler, 1995). In this case, terminology relating to communications technology could be potentially confusing for respondents with little or no experience of ICT. Testing of the survey demonstrated that the concept of belonging to a community was a difficult one for some respondents to interpret. Unlike the first point, this second position was more likely to occur amongst respondents who had already considered their role and function in communities, groups and society in general.

A third area evident during the testing phase was the dilemma relating to the connotation of eDemocracy. It proved difficult to phrase questions appropriately with regard to gauging respondents' understanding of eDemocracy and eGovernment. As Coleman (2004b) observes, both the discourse and definition of eDemocracy are still being contested; no single definition exists and the term often appears to be used in different ways by different people.

Knowledge of and access to, ICT can be considered social and cultural symbols (Feenberg, 1999), and potentially, as can 'awareness of' and 'activity in' the political domain. Analysis of the responses obtained during pilot testing and the subsequent follow-up with participants considered whether social desirability bias (Fisher & Katz, 1999) was an issue. During pilot testing, it was noted that in response to the question 'do you believe the statement "whatever I say or do, I can't influence government"?', 62% of respondents answered 'no' and a further 16% 'somewhat', affirming their answer when questioned later. However, as Coleman (2004b) observes, this question has been used since the 1960s and has demonstrated a significant decline in citizen's perceptions of their influence since this time. Whilst the

response could be explained by social desirability bias, one must also consider that the small sample for the pilot could be biased in favour of those who perceive that they can indeed influence government and that New Zealanders, living as they do in a relatively small country, really do feel that they can influence government (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). For example, relative to Australia, the UK or the US, New Zealand is a country with relatively open and easy access to even senior politicians. With respect to the issue of social desirability bias Fisher and Katz (1999) note, even where such bias does exist it need not be considered a problem for the researcher. Rather it can be treated as an indication of the validity of the measure chosen.

The resolution of these issues included extensive testing of language and phrasing in the test stages of the survey. Ultimately, the survey was designed to ensure that where appropriate explanations were given or, as in the case of the definition of eDemocracy, that possible question responses were pre-coded. Further, definitions were provided for key terms on the participant information sheet<sup>33</sup>.

## 4.5 Participant Recruitment

Data collection took place from November 2004 to the end of January 2005. The over-riding consideration in selecting a sample for the survey instrument would normally be considered to be the representativeness of that sample; how closely it resembles the population being studied (Bouma, 2000; De Vaus, 2003). Interpretivist research is less concerned with the representativeness of the sample than with the representativeness of the concepts and the variation in how these concepts are represented. Whilst one purpose of the survey was to obtain some basic demographic data, it was more important to obtain qualitative and subjective expressions of how ICT was used to support and enable democratic processes within communities. The research, in other words, was “looking for events and incidents that are indicative of the phenomena and [is] not counting individuals or sites per se” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.214).

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<sup>33</sup> See Appendices A and B.

Survey participants were selected because of their involvement in community and political activities at a local or national level and because they were (at least basic) users of ICT.

Participants were sourced through their affiliation and involvement with:

- Community activists
- Community organisations
- Funding agencies
- Macro, or umbrella, networks
- Māori groups
- Local government (politicians and officers)
- Central government (politicians, representatives of agencies and developers of public policy)

A sampling frame was developed that identified the following characteristics:

- Live and/or work in New Zealand
- Involved in community/voluntary sector (civil society or government sector)
- Aged 18 or over (age of franchise)
- Internet access (at least email)

The survey instrument was made available as both a hard-copy document (a printed form available directly from the researcher or downloadable from a website) and an online version on a website. For the recruitment of participants, non-random sampling was used to identify participants within the researcher's own network who matched the sample frame described above. An invitation to participate in the research was distributed to an initial group of potential respondents. Snowball sampling was then employed by encouraging recipients to distribute the request to participate within their appropriate networks. Emails and website postings included both a hyperlink to the survey website and information on how to obtain a



hard-copy version<sup>34</sup>. The direct and (where known) indirect dissemination of the survey announcement was:

Table 10: Distribution of requests to participate in survey.

Direct contact with researcher	Email lists	WSIS-UNESCO	New Zealand email list for discussion of ICT and Civil Society issues (particularly the World Summit on the Information Society).
		Flaxroots	New Zealand community technology list
	Direct emails	Local government	n=28
		Central government	n=25
		Community/Not for profit	n=51
		Academic	n=23
	Website	Social Policy Research and Evaluation, Ministry of Social Development	www.spear.govt.nz.
In-direct; forwarded by third party	Email lists	Social service networks in the Waikato	Via University of Waikato Not for Profit programme.
		Unitec “not for profit” students	Via Unitec School of Health and Community Studies.
		SmartManukau	Enterprise and development mailing list from Manukau City enterprise development agency.
		Unitec Weekly News	Internal electronic newsletter distributed to staff at Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland.
	Website	CommunityNet	www.community.net.nz. Added by Department of Internal Affairs.

## 4.6 Conclusion

The survey instrument was developed using a rigorous, multi-stage process to test the questions, questionnaire structure and the overall construction of the survey instrument. This rigorous testing procedure resulted in a highly effective survey instrument that was able to provide useful and relevant data aimed at answering the key research questions. The data itself is discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>34</sup> See appendices A and B.

This survey contributed to the 'bigger picture' discussion within this research by providing data on who used the internet, how they used it, how often and why. Specifically, it was developed to gain a broad understanding of the use, value and limitations of the internet where it was being used by those active in the community and voluntary sector in New Zealand. The survey was designed to capture a picture of interaction between the community and voluntary sectors with local and central government and also to identify the role the internet played in this.

Like other surveys have done in their own location, it was hoped that this part of the research would demonstrate the extent to which the internet had pervaded this sphere of New Zealand life. However, it is worth noting here that Baym (2003) posits that survey research, whilst an essential and illuminating source of new knowledge on the emerging dominant role of the internet in many facets of our lives, still risks "collapsing internet uses and users into categories and averages" (p.2). The qualitative aspects of this survey instrument were designed partly in an attempt to counter this. However, it is acknowledged that a survey on its own is unlikely to produce sufficient richness of data; hence its inclusion within a larger mixed methods study.

This chapter has described the design and testing of survey instrument which was Phase I of a two part mixed methods study. The survey was administered electronically and in paper-form to obtain quantitative and qualitative data, which is described in the next chapter, Chapter 5. The findings from the survey phase were then used to develop a semi-structured interview instrument, which is described in Chapter 6.

# Chapter 5 – Survey Analysis and Discussion

## 5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter described the development and testing of a survey instrument for data collection and aligned the development of this to the research questions in this study. This chapter presents an analysis and discussion of the data collected using this survey instrument, which was intended to provide broad, generalised findings to develop Phase II of the research<sup>35</sup>. The findings of the survey are described and aligned with the research sub-questions that they inform, providing an analysis and discussion of quantitative and qualitative data.

The procedures adopted for the administration of the survey instrument are discussed first and are followed by the presentation of an analysis of the respondent data, which includes:

- a demographic picture of the respondents;
- adoption and use ICT (including online activity and barriers to use);
- community involvement and the use of ICT and the internet in a community setting;
- political and democratic activities and the use of ICT to support these; and
- the respondent's views on what constitutes eDemocracy.

This is followed by a conclusion that summarises the key findings derived from the data that will be used to develop Phase II of data collection and also to support the overall research conclusions.

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<sup>35</sup> Discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

## 5.2 Administration of the Survey Instrument

This section describes the procedures adopted for the administration of the survey instrument, which sought to explore the extent of community involvement and perceptions of community belonging, amongst those who were active in the community and voluntary sectors and who were already users of ICT. The purpose of the survey was not to support a detailed analysis. Rather it was to provide 'broad brush' data that could be used to develop interview questions as well as to further develop this mixed methods study. Thus, the intent of this analysis and discussion is not to provide a statistical analysis but to give an overview of the situation from the participants' perspective.

## 5.3 Distribution of Survey Instrument and Responses

Data collection took place between November 2004 and January 2005. Information and a request to participate was emailed to known individuals and a number of New Zealand community technology email lists (Flaxroots<sup>36</sup>, WSIS-NZ<sup>37</sup>, WeDG<sup>38</sup> and Work Raft Trust<sup>39</sup>). Details were posted on two websites; the Ministry of Social Development's Social Policy Research and Evaluation website<sup>40</sup> and the CommunityNet Aotearoa website<sup>41</sup>. Email newsletters from both of these websites promoted the survey. The survey announcement was forwarded beyond the original recipients to other individuals and groups. Three specific examples of this are known to the researcher: re-distribution occurred via the SmartManukau mailing list<sup>42</sup>, the Waikato Social Services Sector mailing list and the University of Auckland's Qualitative Research Group mailing list<sup>43</sup>. A follow up email was sent to the original distribution list two weeks prior to the online survey being closed.

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<sup>36</sup> Flaxroots is a community ICT email list maintained by the Department of Internal Affairs.

<sup>37</sup> WSIS-NZ is an email list set up to circulate information and comments relating to community ICT and New Zealand's role in the United Nation's World Summit on the Information Society ([www.wsis.org](http://www.wsis.org)).

<sup>38</sup> Waitakere eDemocracy Group (See: [www.wedg.org.nz](http://www.wedg.org.nz)).

<sup>39</sup> See: [www.workraft.org.nz](http://www.workraft.org.nz).

<sup>40</sup> See: [www.spre.govt.nz](http://www.spre.govt.nz).

<sup>41</sup> A community resource and portal hosted by the Department of Internal Affairs. See: [www.community.net.nz](http://www.community.net.nz).

<sup>42</sup> Local technology and innovation mailing list managed by Manukau City Council.

<sup>43</sup> Refer to Chapter 4 for more information.

The survey was available online or as a paper-based survey that could be printed, completed and returned by mail or fax. In total, 153 survey forms were received. Table 11 shows that 12 of the surveys submitted (8%) contained no data beyond agreeing to take part and these have been discarded from the sample. Therefore, for the purposes of the data analysis 141 responses were used.

Table 11: Survey responses.

Total respondents	153
Made up of:	
Online survey	149
Paper-based survey	4
Incomplete (online) surveys discarded	12
<b>Sample (n=)</b>	<b>141</b>

Not all respondents completed every question (for example, there are 123 responses to the 'age' question and 125 to 'gender'). Item-level non-response was dealt with by excluding null values from the analysis and a revised *n* value is indicated in the text where appropriate. Since this was an online survey, it is not possible to accurately assess a response rate in the traditional sense and this is compounded by the use of snowball sampling techniques (De Vaus, 2003). It is also impossible to determine statistical significance since the entire population of those in some way active in the community and voluntary sector in New Zealand has not been quantified (New Zealand Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organisations, 2004). An indicative assessment would suggest a population of at least one million. Based on this population, the level of accuracy for the random sample assuming a 95% confidence level would be 8.2%. This is acceptable for a survey that seeks to identify key themes and patterns rather than measure activity precisely.

### 5.3.1 Data Analysis Procedures

The data was analysed to produce descriptive statistics and qualitative themes. The raw survey data was stored electronically in the spreadsheet software 'Microsoft Excel' and summaries, tables and graphs were produced using this program. Structured Query Language (SQL) was used with Microsoft Access tables to query, aggregate and group data.

Both MS-Access and SPSS were used to generate cross-tabulated data. The use of SQL meant that very little post-coding was required since data could be selected, grouped and analysed based on its existing qualitative characteristics, thereby reducing the risk of coding errors. Three data items were post-coded manually to ensure consistent responses were available for analysis:

Home location;

Work location; and

Ethnicity

Home and work locations were aggregated to a city or district level and spellings made consistent. Ethnicity types recorded in the 'other' category were reviewed and re-coded where appropriate<sup>44</sup>. However the original classification is noted in the text that follows as the personal coding of ethnicity can be seen as an intentional political act (Callister, 2004).

### **5.3.1.1 Qualitative Data**

The qualitative data was analysed using QSR NVivo, which involved extracting responses to open ended qualitative questions from the raw survey data into documents, formatted to display the respondent identifier and response. Documents were individually coded to identify common themes and to compare emerging concepts with other data through a process of topic coding – where topics raised by participants were identified – and analytical coding – where underlying themes inherent in the respondent's comments were identified (Richards, 2005). 'Free nodes' were initially created then reviewed and groups of similar nodes identified, allowing nodes to be merged into broader categories.

The summative numerical data was also subject to qualitative enquiry through a process of observation, reflection and constant comparison as part of a process in order to consider the wider context and implications of the data that had been captured.

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<sup>44</sup> For example, 'New Zealander' entered as 'other' was re-categorised as 'New Zealander/Pākehā')

## 5.4 Description of Sample

This section describes the respondent's demographics; including age, gender, a reported sense of community belonging, employment, ethnicity and the locations where respondents lived and worked. This created a context for the remainder of the survey analysis by providing a broad picture of 'who the respondents were'. Such demographic information measures 'community belonging' to answer research sub-question 1.3 (what motivates citizens to become involved in the democratic process?) and, by extension, sub-question 1.4 (what motivates participation in an eDemocracy process?).

### 5.4.1 Age and Gender

Respondents' ages ranged from under 24 years (three respondents) and to over 65 (four respondents). However, it is clear from Table 12 that the 40-54 age group was over-represented in the study sample relative to the overall age of the New Zealand population; 44% of survey respondents compared to 21% of the current NZ population were aged 40-54 and 24% of respondents compared to 10% of the NZ population were aged 55-64. Using the mid-point of each age category, the median age of respondents is 47 years old.

Table 13 shows respondents are almost twice as likely to be female (65%) than male (35%), although the current population estimate is 51% female and 49% male (Statistics New Zealand, 2004). These results are similar to those reported in Statistics New Zealand's 'Time Use Survey' (Statistics New Zealand, 2001), where women were more likely to take part in voluntary activities. Whilst men and women spend about the same amount of total time working (averaging 49 hours per week), women spend an average of two hours per day more than men doing unpaid work and, typically, 70% of their work was unpaid (Statistics New Zealand, 2001). The 'Time Use Survey' findings also suggest that the amount of unpaid work undertaken increases with age, peaking in the 55-64 age bracket, suggesting that the survey respondents are younger than the overall volunteering demographic. This most likely reflects the requirement to be a user of ICT as well as active in the community and voluntary sector.

Table 12: Age range of respondents (n=125)

Age range	Respondents	Percentage	Population estimate <sup>45</sup>
18-24	3	2%	14% <sup>46</sup>
25-39	33	26%	21%
40-54	55	44%	21%
55-64	30	24%	10%
65 and over	4	3%	12%

Table 13: Gender of respondents (n=125)

Gender	Respondents	Percentage	Census <sup>47</sup>
Female	81	65%	51%
Male	44	35%	49%

## 5.4.2 Community Involvement

This section identifies levels of ‘community belonging’ and social connectedness by discussing levels of contact with neighbours and friends, community membership and frequency of participation in community events. Dickson (2004) suggests strong levels of social capital<sup>48</sup> exist in New Zealand. The New Zealand Government’s Social Report 2005 suggest that 87% of the general population take part in family/whānau activities and 71% have invite family or friends over for a meal at least monthly (Ministry of Social Development, 2005). The Social Report also notes that 69% of New Zealanders believe people can be trusted (eight percent reporting that ‘people can almost always be trusted’ and 61% that ‘people can usually be trusted’). The survey data supports these indicators of high levels of social capital, suggesting that, as well as being active in their community, respondents are well connected to their neighbours and nearby friends (see Table 14).

Table 14: Contact with neighbours/nearby friends over last month (n=124)

Frequency	Respondents
6 or more times	47%
3 to 5 times	31%
1 or 2 times	18%
None	4%

<sup>45</sup> (Statistics New Zealand, 2004).

<sup>46</sup> Population estimates are in bands 15-19 and 19-24, however the research was restricted to participants over the age of 18.

<sup>47</sup> (Statistics New Zealand, 2004)

<sup>48</sup> The resources that communities have available for support, trust, obligation and reciprocity (Putnam, 2000). This is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.



Strong social capital is seen as a motivator for involvement in democratic processes (research sub-question 1.3) and internet-access as an enabler of increased social connectedness (Ministry of Social Development, 2005). Table 14 shows that 95% of respondents visited a neighbour or nearby friend in the month prior to completing the survey and 47% had visited six or more times.

As Figure 10 shows, most respondents (88%; 107) agreed that they were members of one or more community(ies). Community involvement was strong amongst respondents with 65% (92) actively participating (excluding sport and religious organisations). These activities ranged from executive/governance roles with not for profit groups, committee membership, active members of resident and ratepayer groups, political parties, elected representatives, advocacy, lobbying and providing support services in the community.

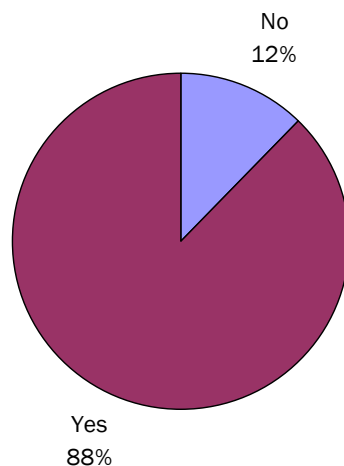


Figure 10: Are you a member of one or more community (n=122)?

Of the 12% (15 respondents) who indicate that they were not members of a community, one noted involvement in ethnic community events and three stated that they had been involved in establishing a community group. Nine respondents stated that they were rarely or never involved in community events, two were involved on a weekly basis and four on a monthly or more basis. Of the 76% of respondents (107) who indicated that they were a member of one or more community, 68% (73) had been involved in establishing a community group. Table 15 suggests that involvement in community activities was a normal part of the

respondent’s everyday lives; 67% of respondents who indicated that they were a member of a community participate in community activities on at least a weekly basis (46% participate more often than weekly). Belonging to a community (or not) supports research sub-question 1.3 (what motivates citizens to become involved in the democratic process?), since it establishes that respondents are engaged in community activity (of which democratic activity is a sub-set). This sub-question is explored in more detail in the section on political and democratic activity below.

Table 15: How often do you participate in community activities (n=122)?

Frequency	Consider self to be a member of a community		Do not consider self to be a member of a community		Total	
	n	%age	n	%age	n	%
More than weekly	49	40%	1	1%	50	41%
Weekly	23	19%	2	2%	25	20%
2-3 times a month	16	13%	1	1%	17	14%
Once a month	15	12%	2	2%	17	14%
Rarely or never	4	3%	9	7%	13	11%

### 5.4.3 Occupation

Of the 141 respondents, 91% (128) provided information on their occupation. Of these, 23% (30) were employed in the public sector. Local government employees account for 17% (22) of respondents (8 of whom are employed by Waitakere City Council), 4% (5) were in central government and 2% (3) held policy or strategy-related roles for a district health board. A further 2% (3) of responses could not be categorised because respondents were involved in contract-based positions in the public sector or, in one case, the respondent had two part-time roles; one in the public sector and one in the private sector.

The 77% of respondents (98) who were not employed in the public sector included six retirees, three homemakers and one full-time student (although others indicated elsewhere that they were undertaking study). Four respondents identified themselves as having ‘portfolio careers’ without elaborating and 38% (48) of respondents work in a commercial organisation or business, which included self-employment. Only 19% (24) of respondents

identified that they were predominantly employed in the community or voluntary sector, as shown in Table 16.

Table 16: Employment by sector for non-public sector respondents (n=98).

Sector	Respondents
Business	40
Community	24
Education	15
Health	5
Homemaker	3
Portfolio worker	4
Retired	6
Student	1

## 5.4.4 Ethnicity

As can be seen from Table 17, the majority of respondents self-identified as 'New Zealand/Pākehā' (78%). Although some ethnicity responses have been re-categorised from 'other' to an existing category for the purposes of this analysis it is important to note the original response since the recording of ethnicity can be seen as a political act, particularly so when it relates to the terms 'New Zealander', 'Pākehā', 'Māori' or 'Tangata whenua' (Callister, 2004). The second most widely represented group was 'European', which includes those self-identifying as 'British' or 'Irish'. Māori (including self-describing 'Tangata whenua') made up 10% of respondents and 3% were Pasifika, suggesting an under-representation of Māori (14% of the population at the last census) and Pasifika (6% of the population) (Statistics New Zealand, 2002c). Six respondents classified as 'other' included three Canadians, one American, one Australian and one Latin American.

Table 17: Summary of ethnicity of responses (n=123; multiple responses allowed).

Ethnic group	Respondents	Percentage	Census <sup>49</sup>
New Zealander/Pākehā	97	78%	75%
Māori	12	10%	14%
European	17	14%	5%
Pacific Island	4	3%	6%
Asian	6	5%	6%
Other	6	5%	-

<sup>49</sup> The 2001 Census allowed respondents to select multiple categories; therefore totals do not add up to 100%.

Not stated	1	1%	-
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### 5.4.5 Home and Work Location

The respondents were drawn from right across New Zealand. Figure 11 shows the furthest south is from the Clutha District at the base of the South Island and the furthest north from the Hokianga.

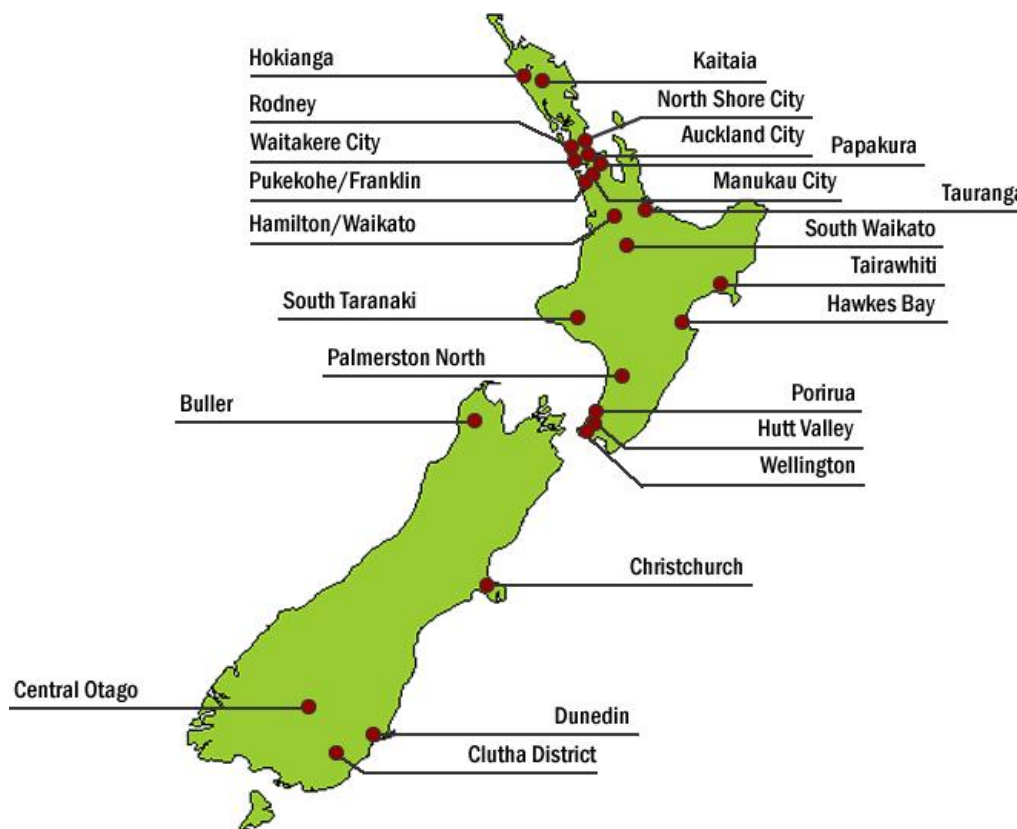


Figure 11: Map of New Zealand showing location of respondents.

Figure 12 shows that the majority of respondents lived in the Auckland region<sup>50</sup> (58%), with the Wellington region<sup>51</sup> being the next most widely represented with 18% of respondents. The geographical distribution can be explained by participants in Waitakere City being more aware of the research. The same applies to Auckland City, given both its geographic proximity to the researcher’s own location and its position as New Zealand’s major

<sup>50</sup> The Auckland region includes respondents from Auckland City, Waitakere City, North Shore City, Manukau City, Pakuranga District and Franklin District (Pukekohe).

<sup>51</sup> The Wellington region includes respondents from Wellington, Hutt Valley and Porirua.

commercial and population centre. There was more CI activity in Wellington and it is the centre of government, where many government agencies and civil society organisations are located.

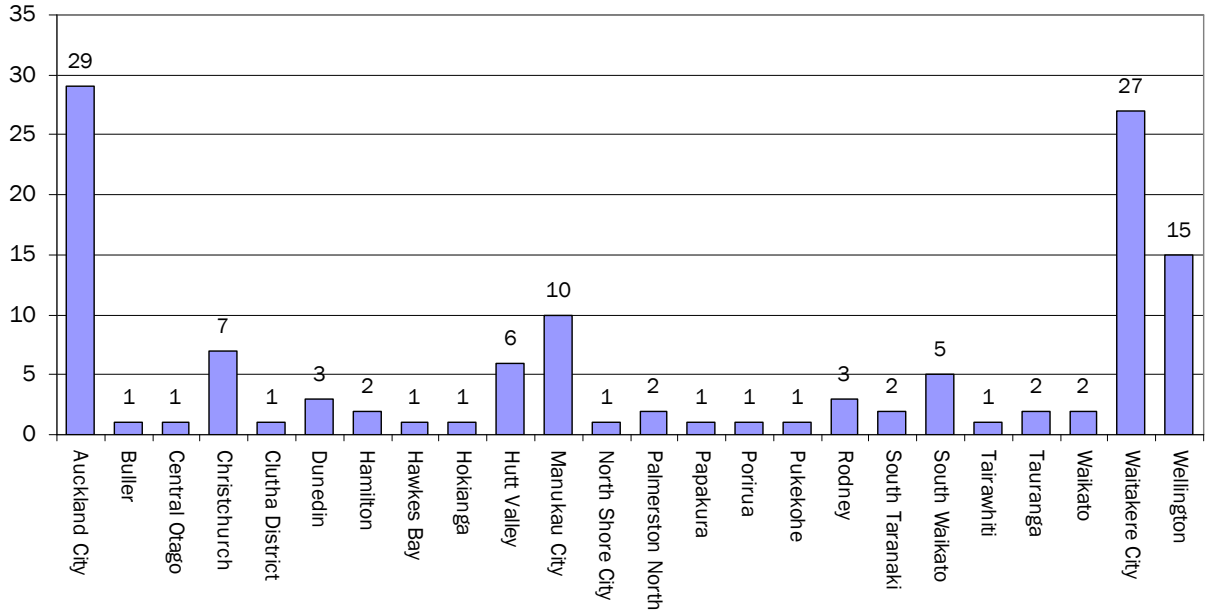


Figure 12: Total respondents by home location (n=125)

Figure 13 reveals that more respondents work in Auckland City (25%) than anywhere else, 22% work in Waitakere City and 12% in Wellington. Five percent of respondents identified themselves as retired.

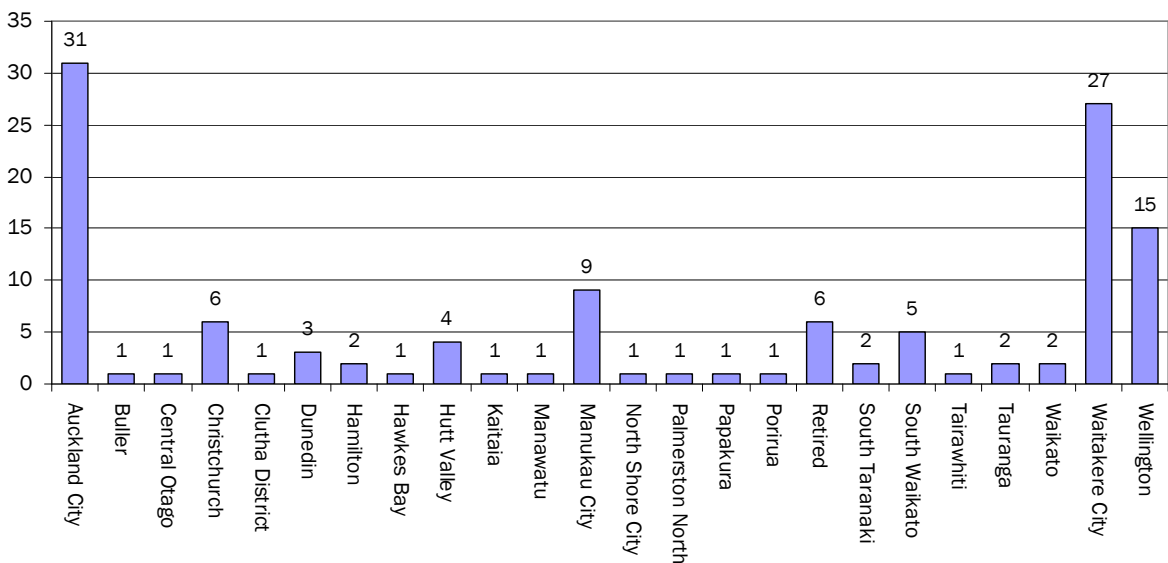


Figure 13: Total respondents by work location (n=125)

## 5.4.6 Summary

The foregoing section has provided a demographic overview of the survey respondents. Respondents were more likely to be middle aged, female and to live and work in a major city (particularly Auckland City, Waitakere City or Wellington). The majority of respondents were Pākehā/European but the sample included Māori, Pacific Island and Asians. Respondents were employed in a variety of commercial, government, educational and voluntary organisations. Regardless of which sector they were employed in, respondents overwhelmingly felt that they were members of a community (88%) and most were active in those communities (65%). The sample appears representative of those persons active in the community and voluntary sector in New Zealand, discussed in Chapter 2.

## 5.5 Levels of Technology Adoption

Having described the demographics of the respondents, this next section presents the results of the respondent's use of computers and the internet. It will first discuss when respondents started using computers and the internet and then describe their perceptions towards adopting technology. Both this section and the next (computer and internet use) relate directly to the following research sub-question:

SQ1.5      What factors influence and facilitate the adoption of ICT amongst those with an interest in local democracy?

Figure 14 and Figure 15 show adoption patterns for computers in general and for the internet. The survey was targeted at existing users of the internet, therefore, as expected there was 100% usage of the internet amongst the respondents. The data shows that many survey respondents were long-time users of computers; 76% (107) of the respondents have been using a computer since before 1990 (of which, 51% (70) first used a computer in or before 1980), which could in part be a reflection on the age of the sample. Only four

respondents had ICT-specific employment<sup>52</sup>. Only three respondents (2%) first used a computer after 2000; all three were female, New Zealanders/Pākehā and working in the community/voluntary sector.

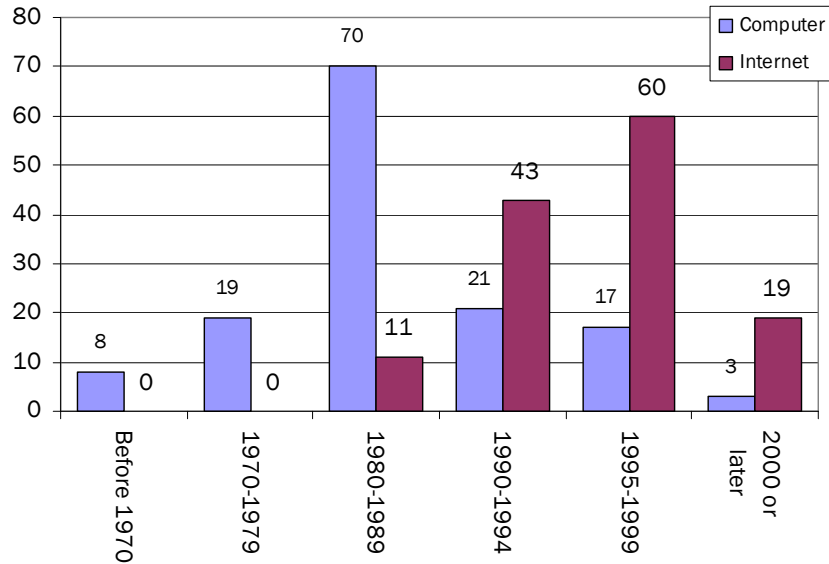


Figure 14: Adopters of computers (n=138) and internet (n=133) per period.

Internet uptake was at its peak amongst this cohort between 1995 and 1999, with 45% (60) of respondents first using the internet at this time. The result reveals earlier adoption of the internet than was anticipated based on the available statistics for New Zealand. The 2001 Census (Statistics New Zealand, 2002d) showed internet usage in New Zealand at 37%, yet, notwithstanding the small sample size, amongst this cohort it was 98% in 2001. Only 14% (19) of respondents started using the internet in or after 2000.

<sup>52</sup> Two computer consultants, two involved in internet development and publishing and one in an IT management position.

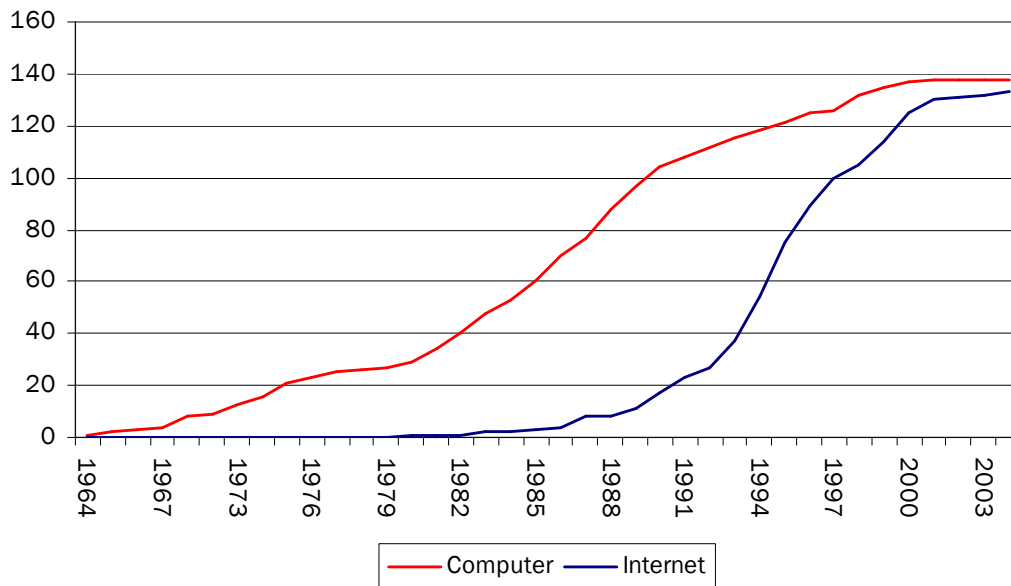


Figure 15: Cumulative Computer (n=138) and internet (n=133) adoption.

Despite this relatively early uptake of computers and the internet, Figure 16 shows that only 4% of respondents considered themselves to be “early adopters” of new technology (Moore, 1999, p.12)<sup>53</sup>.

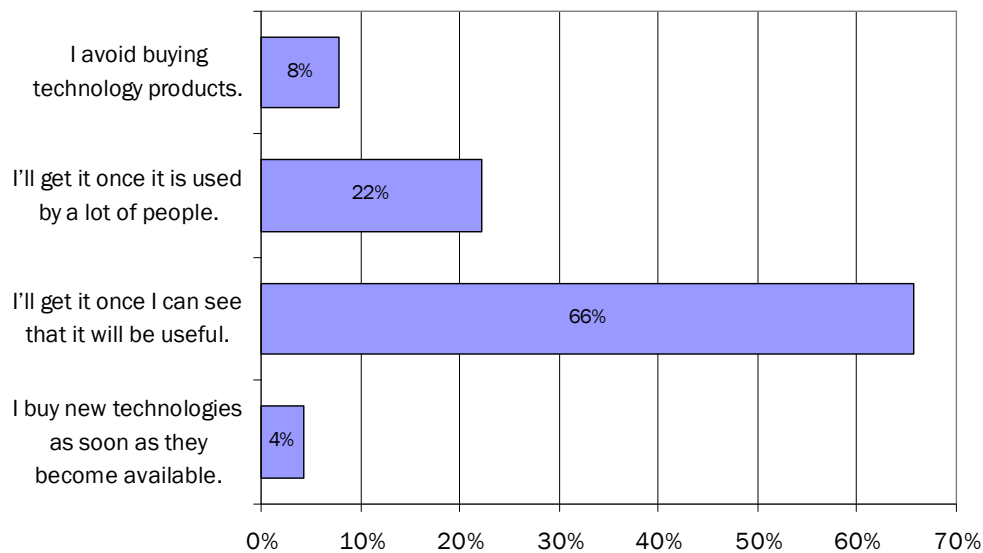


Figure 16: Reasons for adopting new technology.

<sup>53</sup> Indicated by “I buy new technologies as soon as they become available” in Figure 16.



The majority of respondents chose to adopt this technology based on it being of perceived use to them and not because of the technology itself. As Moore (1999, p.12) suggests, such individuals are still to some extent innovators but unlike the early adopters this “early majority” must “relate potential benefits to other concerns” and are more likely to be driven by a “strong sense of practicality”. The 22% of respondents who delayed acquiring ICT until it was commonplace can be located in what Moore refers to as the “late majority” (p.12). This group tends to be less comfortable with their own ability to integrate and manage new technology and are more likely to delay adopting something new until it is an “established standard, and even then they want to see lots of support and tend to buy... from large, well established companies” (p.13).

### 5.5.1 Summary

When compared to Census data, the above results are somewhat unexpected, showing significantly higher levels of uptake of ICT and the internet compared to the general population. This point is not referring to high levels of adoption per se but rather to the length of time respondents had been using computers and the internet. Given the general nature of the population Census statistics would have suggested later adoption than was revealed in the survey, although respondents generally consider themselves to be “early majority” adopters (Moore, 1999, p.12). Given that eDemocracy is still an emergent concept, this adoption pattern could be significant in determining the motivations for its uptake and re-enforces the concept that technology adoption is socially, not technologically, determined. It suggests that actors in the community and voluntary sector were not simply adapting (or reacting) to technological change either in their sector or within the society at large (the census statistics tell us this), rather they were making a choice based on the perceived relevance and ‘fit’ of the technology within their own social context and in order to achieve their own objectives. The comparatively early adoption of both computers and the internet and current high levels of usage suggest high levels of adoption. Whilst the data does not explicitly show continuity of adoption, the patterns reported here support the concepts of discontinuous adoption based on psychographic states (Moore & Benbasat, 1991). They show that the uptake of ICT is demonstrably occurring in order to support personal activities and

that adoption has progressed to a point 'where the available technology meets the socially defined needs of cohort' (Feenberg, 1999).

## 5.6 Using Computers and the Internet

The survey respondents were all users of ICT. This section reports on how and where respondents used computers and the internet and identifies perceived barriers to use, contributing to answering research sub-questions 1.5 and 1.6:

What is the basic social process influencing the adoption of eDemocracy practices?

Internet use appears to play a part in raising or maintaining levels of social connectedness. As a report from the Ministry of Social Development (2005) notes, internet access is a significant factor in building social connectedness because it gives people "more access to information and, as a consequence, more opportunity to engage in society" (p.115).

Table 18 shows that 98% (138 respondents) accessed the internet and email on a daily basis. Only one of the respondents accessed the internet less than monthly from any location.

Table 18: Percentage of respondents who access the internet at varying locations (n=141)

Location	Respondents	Frequency of access			
		Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Now & then
Home	94%	80%	13%	2%	5%
Work	90%	97%	2%	0%	2%
School/Tertiary institute	19%	56%	0%	11%	33%
Cybercafé	19%	0%	11%	11%	78%
Library/Community centre	18%	8%	8%	12%	73%
Mobile device	19%	19%	26%	0%	56%

It can be seen from Figure 17 that respondents were most likely to access the internet from home (94%) or from work (90%). They are more likely to access the internet from work (97%) and home (80%) on a daily basis, compared to 19% of respondents who accessed the internet at some time through a school or tertiary institution or cybercafé and 18% who used a library or community centre. Respondents who use public internet access facilities are less likely to do so regularly than those who had access at home or work. None of the respondents used a cybercafé on a daily basis and only three did so weekly and three monthly. Only two respondents used a library or a community centre on daily basis (one identifies as a portfolio worker, the second as a community worker) and 11% a school or tertiary institution (of which, nine identified their primary occupation as being in the academic sector and one as a student). Whilst 19% of respondents have used a mobile device to connect to the internet or check email, only five did so daily and seven weekly.

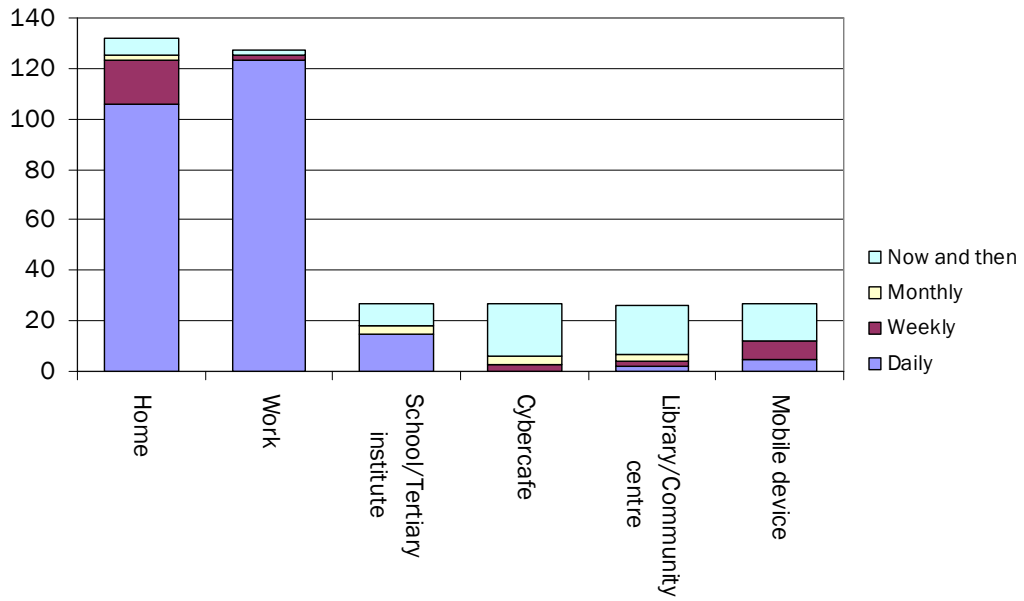


Figure 17: Frequency of internet access by location (n=141)

Figure 18 shows that the majority of respondents (89%) accessed the internet from more than one location and 67% do so daily. Only 11% (16 respondents) accessed the internet from one location.

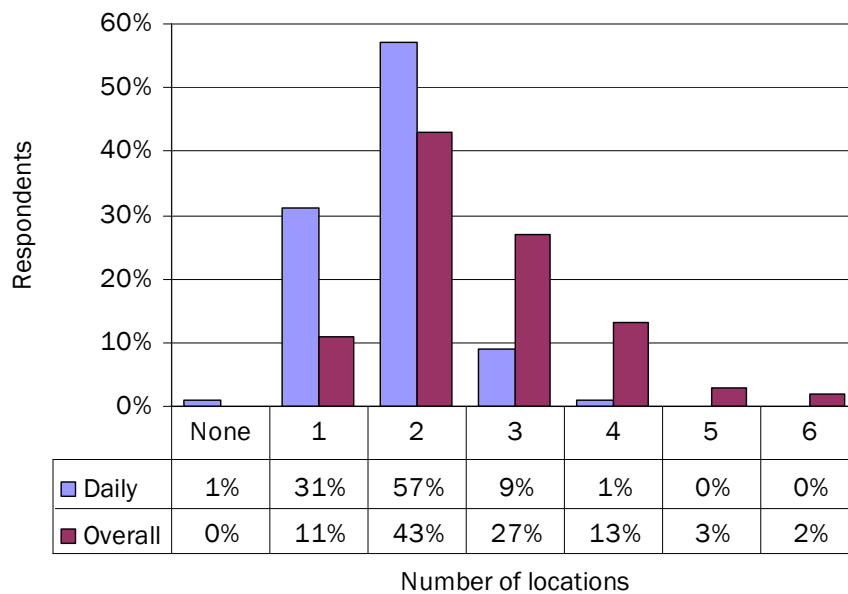


Figure 18: Respondents accessing the internet from multiple locations (n=141)

Internet access occurred less frequently through a public access facility compared to access from home or work. Table 19 re-enforces this, showing that those respondents who only accessed the internet from a single location do so from either home or work and none accessed the internet solely from a public facility.

Table 19: Internet access from a single location (n=141)

Location	Daily		Total	
	n	%age	n	%age
Home	16	11%	10	7%
Work	28	20%	6	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11%</b>

### 5.6.1 Online Activity

Earlier in this chapter, it was shown that the majority of respondents identified their personal motivation for using computers and the internet as its perceived usefulness. The next section describes the nature and frequency of internet use, perceived usefulness of the internet for keeping respondents informed and the respondents' self-evaluated levels of ICT expertise.

Table 20 shows that in their personal use of the internet the main activities described by respondents (n=141) were 'to keep informed and up to date' (99% of respondents, 70% on a daily basis) and 'to do research' (98%).

Table 20: Online activity and frequency of that activity.

Activity	Respondents									
	Daily		Weekly		Monthly		Now and then		Total	
	n	%age	n	%age	n	%age	n	%age	n	%age
To keep informed / up to date	98	70%	27	19%	1	1%	13	9%	139	99%
To do research	47	33%	58	41%	13	9%	20	14%	138	98%
To communicate with others	126	89%	7	5%	1	1%	2	1%	136	96%
To access government services	26	18%	37	26%	25	18%	46	33%	134	95%
To support hobbies/interests	43	30%	39	28%	15	11%	35	25%	132	94%
To find out about my community	25	18%	32	23%	18	13%	53	38%	128	91%
To book travel and accommodation	4	3%	5	4%	27	19%	86	61%	122	87%
For education	36	26%	36	26%	15	11%	33	23%	120	85%
To buy products or services	5	4%	18	13%	29	21%	66	47%	118	84%
To find health / medical information	4	3%	20	14%	17	12%	71	50%	112	79%
To do my banking	22	16%	54	38%	22	16%	13	9%	111	79%
To pay bills	5	4%	43	30%	38	27%	21	15%	107	76%
For entertainment	20	14%	32	23%	10	7%	45	32%	107	76%
To play online games	6	4%	3	2%	3	2%	18	13%	30	21%

It is notable in the context of the research questions that 'to do research' occurred less frequently compared to the more passive 'to keep informed and up to date'. As Table 21 shows, 50% of respondents used the internet 'to do research' on a weekly or monthly basis and 33% do so daily.

Table 21: Online use, daily usage and never use percentages (n=141).

	Activity	Use	Daily	Never use
Very high levels of activity (90% or more)	To keep informed/up to date	99%	70%	1%
	To do research	98%	33%	2%
	To communicate with others	96%	89%	4%
	To access government services	95%	18%	5%
	To support hobbies/interests	94%	30%	6%
	To find out about my community	91%	18%	9%
High levels of activity (75-84%)	To book travel and accommodation	87%	3%	13%
	For education	85%	26%	15%
	To buy products or services	84%	4%	16%
	To find health/medical information	79%	3%	21%
	To do my banking	79%	16%	21%
	To pay bills	76%	4%	24%
	For entertainment	76%	14%	24%
Low levels of activity (less than 25%)	To play online games	21%	4%	79%

Using the internet 'to communicate with others' (96%; 89% daily) or to 'keep informed and up to date' (99%; 70% daily) were the most frequently occurring online activities. Only five respondents did not use the internet at all for communication. The activity least likely to occur amongst the cohort, with 21% of respondents, was 'to play online games'. This is likely to be a reflection on the age and demographic of the sample. Of the 30 respondents who indicated that they do play online games, 60% (18) indicated that they do so 'now and then'.

Respondents overwhelmingly indicated that the internet helps keep them informed and Figure 19 shows that 97% of respondents (136) indicated that the internet helped a lot or somewhat with this.

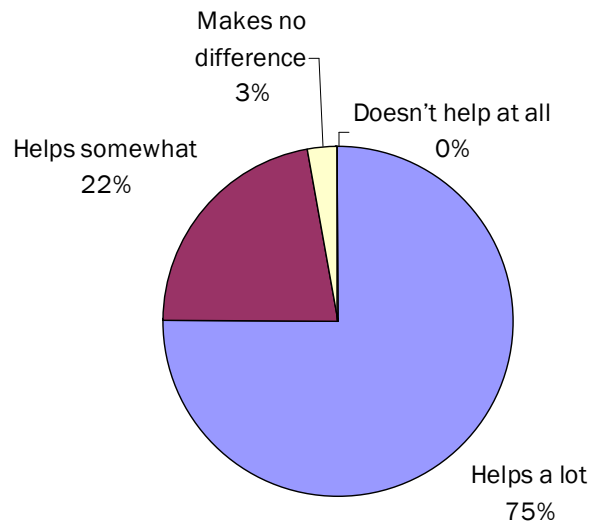


Figure 19: Does the internet help keep you informed (n=140)?

Although only 15% (21) of respondents considered themselves to be expert users, most (79%; 110) rated themselves as an experienced user. Figure 20 also shows that 6% (9) of respondents self-identified as a not very experienced computer user.

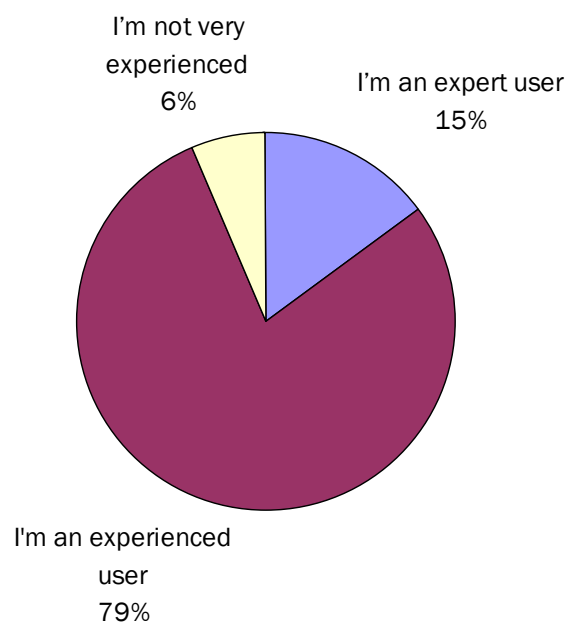


Figure 20: What best describes you as a user of computers (n=140)?

## 5.6.2 Barriers to Increased Personal Use of the Internet

The results relating to personal usage shows a high level of internet use amongst the cohort and that this use is relatively long standing. The foregoing results show that whilst access



typically occurs from a variety of locations, home and work were the most popular locations for accessing the internet. Respondents identified 'perceived value' as a primary motivator for use and hence the high levels of use suggest strong perceived value. However, some barriers to use do exist for many of the participants (since this was a multiple selection question, totals do not add up to the total respondents). Figure 21 shows that 33% of respondents (46) saw cost as a barrier to access and that concern over viruses (23%; 32) and ease of internet access (12%; 29) discouraged greater internet use.

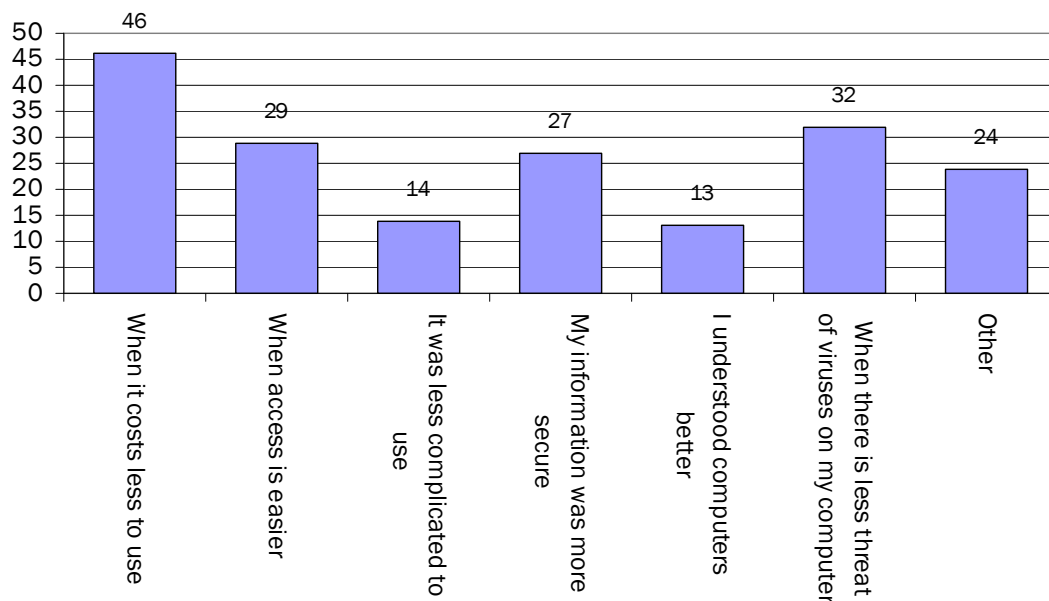


Figure 21: Barriers to increased personal use of the internet (n=139).

Of the 24 respondents (17%) who indicated other reasons preventing them from using the internet more, seven themes emerge, of which the availability and affordability of faster, broadband connections was the most significant. The themes were:

- Access – internet access more affordable and more available through other devices.
- Broadband – not available (or not available at a 'reasonable' price).
- Cost – when the cost reduces.
- Relevance – more relevant to the job being performed.
- Safer – issues with personal health and safety, such as occupational overuse.
- Speed – currently too slow.

- Time – needing more if it.

There is a suggestion emerging from the data that the increased affordability and availability of broadband connections would encourage a change in usage patterns. For example respondent S117, who lived outside a major metropolitan area and used the internet on a daily basis at work, observed that

when broadband services are available I would use it more at my home [S117].

This assertion is supported by Howell (2003), who also observes that there appears to be a distinct lack of perceived benefit from broadband and that this acts a significant barrier to its uptake in New Zealand. Despite high levels of internet adoption, New Zealand ranks only 22<sup>nd</sup> out of 30 OECD countries for broadband adoption and speed of uptake (Nowak, 2005) and it has the same ranking for overall broadband performance and service (Williamson, 2006b).

### 5.6.3 Summary

Most of the respondents considered themselves to be experienced, but not expert, users of computers and the internet. Almost all respondents accessed the internet from either home or work and most did this on a daily basis. An implication of these findings is that those who lack immediate access to the internet were using it less and less often, suggesting an existing inequity regarding accessing the benefits to be gained by immediacy of access.

The respondents' primary uses of the internet were; to keep informed and up to date; to do research; communicate with others; and, of particular interest to this study, to access government services. Whilst internet usage levels were high, a significant minority of respondents report barriers to further use. In particular the cost, security of information and threat from viruses as well as ease of access were all barriers that prevented respondents from using the internet more.

These findings support the earlier discussion regarding the adoption or uptake of computers and the internet being driven by a perceived value to the individual. In relation to research sub-question 5.1, they suggest that immediacy of access is important (and, conversely, that lack of immediacy is potentially a barrier to effective use), as are the availability of useful and relevant content, access to online services and the ability to communicate with others. In relation to sub-question 1.6, the results suggest that respondents were motivated to use online media in order to be better informed and to communicate. Both matters are strong pre-cursors to involvement in democratic practices. Current knowledge and the ability to communicate effectively are important prerequisites for rationale debate (Bohman, 1997).

## 5.7 Online Community

This next section presents the results relating to the nature of online community as it was described by the participants. The results of participating in online communities are presented along with the reported benefits of belonging to an online community as well as the barriers that limited the respondents' opportunities to use the internet in their community activity. The results relating to online community membership assist with answering for following research sub-questions:

- SQ1.4      What motivates participation in an eDemocracy process?
- SQ1.6      What is the basic social process influencing the adoption of eDemocracy practices?

### 5.7.1 Level of Participation in Online Communities

Figure 22 shows that, where 88% of respondents considered themselves members of a community, 63% (79 respondents) identified themselves as belonging to an online community.

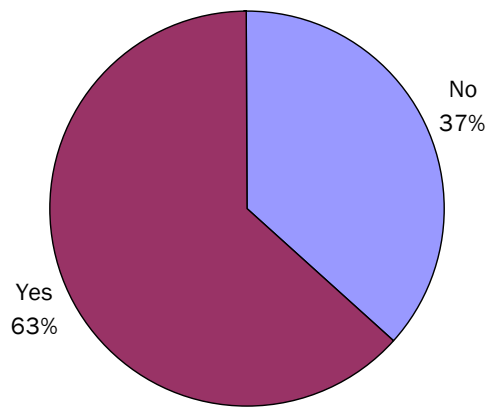


Figure 22: Member of an online community (n=125)?

Table 22 shows that three respondents identified as belonging to an online community but did not indicate that they were members of a traditional (local or topical) community (a total of 15 respondents reported not belonging to a community). Sixty nine percent (74) identified themselves as belonging to both a physical-world and an online community.

Table 22: Membership of traditional versus online communities.

		Member of a community				Total	%age
		No	Yes	Not answered			
Member of an online Community	No	12	33	1	46	37%	
	Yes	3	74	2	79	63%	
n=		15	107	3	125		

Table 23 shows that when the respondents' perceptions of how useful the internet is at keeping them informed about things they are interested in (see Figure 19 above) are cross-tabulated against membership of an online community, those who stated that they belonged to an online community appear to find the internet more useful than those who did not belong to an online community.

Table 23: Value of the internet for keeping informed versus membership of an online community (n=123).

Does the internet keep you informed?	Belong to an online community?			
	No		Yes	
	n	%age	n	%age
Helps a lot	29	64%	61	78%
Helps somewhat	12	27%	17	22%
makes no difference	3	7%	0	0%
Not answered	1	2%	0	0%
Total	45	100%	78	100%

Figure 23 shows a summary of themes that emerged from the respondents' comments on the advantages (and disadvantages) that they identified getting from belonging to an online community. The most prominent of these were 'a sense of belonging' and 'the ability to communicate'. The themes appear in part to be related to removing the tyranny of distance and allowing a connection with like-minds anywhere regardless of physical proximity. Respondents reported that belonging to a virtual world helped to break down barriers of physical isolation due to location and caused by changes in personal circumstances; for example becoming a home-based caregiver.



Figure 23: Benefits of belonging to an online community.

The reported benefits of belonging to an online community included:

Sense of togetherness - knowing what others are thinking and doing [S14];

Feeling of not being alone or isolated in my views/beliefs ... able to be up to date with what's happening with my community members anywhere in the world. Feeling that I can make a difference - I can effect change despite geographical or financial obstacles [S34]; and

Knowing what is happening through other channels than the official 'spin version' of politics. Knowing that we can get results and support each other's views [S53].

For one respondent who found it hard to access physical resources the benefits were clear,

I can be more than just what I do physically every day i.e. I'm a house mum but online I'm a philosopher, a social bunny, an intellectual, a helper.... I have worth above and beyond being trapped at home with small children in a small town. My voice is heard daily and it achieves results [S34].

A common theme to emerge from the qualitative survey data was 'the ability to communicate with others who held similar views but are physically separated'. Such a tendency to seek out those who have similar views, rather than enter into discussion with opposing viewpoints, is also reported by Witschge (2002) in a review of literature relating to online participation and engagement in democratic and political activity and appears to be a consistent feature of online fora. The internet was seen by many respondents as an effective tool for communicating across distance. The analysis of the qualitative data suggests that respondents perceived the internet to be a useful tool for resourcing their physical-world communities, as a way of saving time, making better use of resources and of being 'kept in the loop'. The internet was seen as supporting online communities as well as extending and supporting existing traditional ones by making it easier to maintain communication with others and improving the

ability to communicate and share ideas, news, and co-ordinate activity without the need for a face-to-face meeting in a specific location and time. Easy contact with others who are geographically remote [S50].

A note of caution was evident in a small number of responses, reflecting an awareness of internet safety issues and that personal care was needed when interacting online:

I don't talk in chatrooms etc with people I don't know in person [S102]; and

Sometimes communication would be better in person, misunderstandings can occur through the informal writing styles in emails [S18].

## 5.7.2 Summary

Almost two-thirds (63%) of respondents belonged to an online community. They cited the primary advantages of online communities as being 'a sense of belonging' and 'an ability to communicate easily and effectively with other people who, primarily, hold similar interests and views'. The foregoing discussion shows that belonging to an online community provided many respondents with resources and sources of professional development. However, participation in the online world was limited for some by a lack of confidence and an increased risk of miscommunication, a particular consequence of using email. Examples of this are seen elsewhere and Rheingold (1994) suggests that this is because email lacks the visual and audio richness of face-to-face communication. Having examined personal use of computers and the internet and community membership, the next section will discuss how respondents were using the internet to support their community and voluntary activities.

## 5.8 Using the Internet for Community Activity

The previous section demonstrated that the majority of respondents participating in Phase I belonged to at least one community and mostly also belonged to at least one online community. Furthermore, belonging to a community and communication appeared to be primary motivators for online connectivity amongst the cohort, who made extensive use of computers and the internet in their personal lives. The next section extends consideration of

respondent community participation by exploring how and how often the internet was used to support community and voluntary activities. By identifying responses related to internet use and barriers preventing greater use for community activities, this section will provide data pertinent to the following research sub-questions:

- SQ1.1      What is understood to be meant by the terms eDemocracy, eGovernment and eGovernance?
- SQ1.3      What motivates citizens to become involved in the democratic process?
- SQ1.4      What motivates participation in an eDemocracy process?
- SQ1.7      What is the basic social process of enhanced civic participation through eDemocracy?

Further evidence of the adoption of the internet amongst the cohort in their community activity is shown in Figure 24, which shows that 35% (43 respondents) had been involved in creating a website for a community group or community-based project. Whilst demonstrates that the internet was used less often for community activities than it was for personal activities, Figure 24 suggests that the internet contributed to the community activity of the majority of respondents.



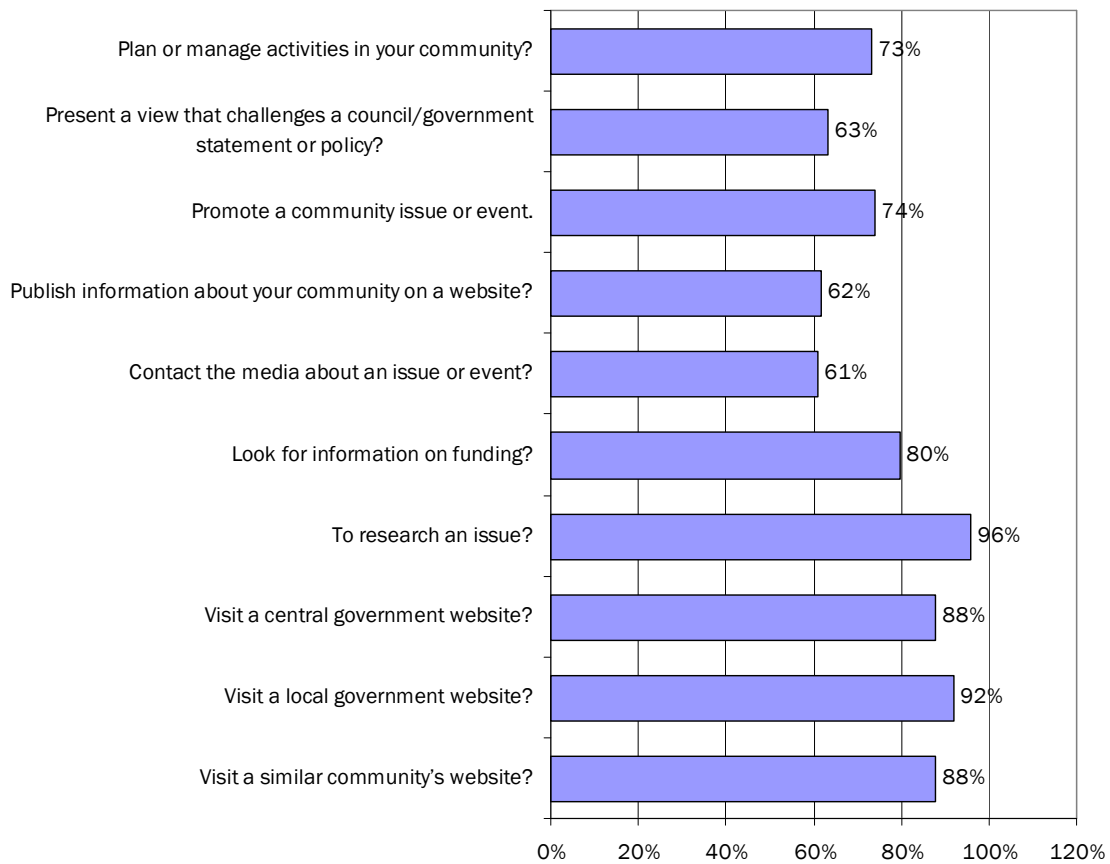


Figure 24: Internet use to support community activity (n=125).

Table 24 shows the online activity undertaken most by the respondents in support of their community activities. The most popular use was 'to research an issue' relating to a community interest (96%), followed by preferences for 'visit a local government website' (92%), 'visit a central government website' (88%) and 'visit a similar community's website' (88%). Whilst the internet was used 'to plan and manage activities' in the community by 73% of respondents, it was the activity that was most likely to occur on a regular basis (18% are doing so daily). The internet was least likely to be used 'to contact the media about a community issue or event' (42% had not used the internet for this purpose) or to publish information about the respondent's community on a website (not done by 42%). Whilst 37% of respondents had not used the internet to present a view that challenged a council or government statement or policy. Of the 63% who had done this, 43% did so only occasionally and only 2% did so daily (both of whom identified themselves as Māori).

Table 24 examines these collective responses in more detail, and shows that information discovery (researching an issue, visiting a government or community website, looking for information on funding) and communication were primary online activities (contact media or publishing). Fifty four percent of respondents used the internet to research an issue on at least a weekly basis and 39% visited a local government website on at least a weekly basis. Publishing and promoting information about community activities were the activities least likely to occur and also occurred less frequently; 39% never contacted the media and 39% did so occasionally.

**Table 24: How often have you used the internet to do the following to support your community activities (n=125)?**

	Daily		Weekly		Monthly		Now and then		Never	
	n	%age	n	%age	n	%age	n	%age	n	%age
To research an issue?	17	14%	49	40%	23	19%	29	24%	5	4%
Visit a local government website?	13	11%	34	28%	27	22%	39	32%	10	8%
Visit a similar community's website?	11	9%	34	28%	21	17%	42	34%	15	12%
Visit a central government website?	9	7%	36	29%	31	25%	32	26%	15	12%
Look for information on funding?	6	5%	23	19%	25	20%	44	36%	25	20%
Promote a community issue or event.	8	7%	26	21%	19	15%	38	31%	32	26%
Plan or manage activities in your community?	22	18%	20	16%	15	12%	33	27%	33	27%
Present a view that challenges a council/government statement or policy?	2	2%	8	7%	15	12%	53	43%	45	37%
Publish information about your community on a website?	7	6%	13	11%	17	14%	39	32%	47	38%
Contact the media about an issue or event?	2	2%	6	5%	19	15%	48	39%	48	39%

The data shown in Figure 24 and Table 24 demonstrates the importance of the internet for supporting community activities amongst the respondents. Respondents described their current community uses for the internet, including:

Beginning to use WaitakereOnline<sup>54</sup> and encourage it to publish useful information [S4];

Advertising a community event [S6];

Use it as a link to the community enterprise network that I am involved in [S16];

Communicate on behalf of the community [S18];

Assist with a Community web site [S140];

Maintain a couple of websites, distribute minutes, call meetings, distribute agenda and reports, share material [S24];

egroups [for executive, internal committees, members and 'friends of' our community] [S27];

Communication via email to trustees, employees and interested people on issues activities etc [S124];

Network between communities, network within communities as a decision-making process when it is physically impossible to meet face-to-face. Share information with others within and between communities, conflict resolution, emotional support, entertainment within community [S34];

Sharing information, minutes of meetings, consulting about issues, contacting media, advertising jobs, promoting events [S40];

Very useful for committee communication/sharing documents before they are released [S96];

Networking of groups and individuals via email lists [S97];

Manage a website. Organise a national discussions and teleconferences [S101];

A lot of the information re funding etc is currently sent to me so I don't have to go looking for it except when I need more detailed information [S102];

Freely distribute open source software [mostly software I have written] [S134];

Gather information internationally for relevance to local issues [S137];

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<sup>54</sup> Waitakere City Web Portal: [www.waitakereonline.co.nz](http://www.waitakereonline.co.nz)

To search for possible activities to become involved in [S54];

Disappointed that few on our ratepayers network provide email addresses so correspondence is by phone or hard copy - not effective [S28]; and

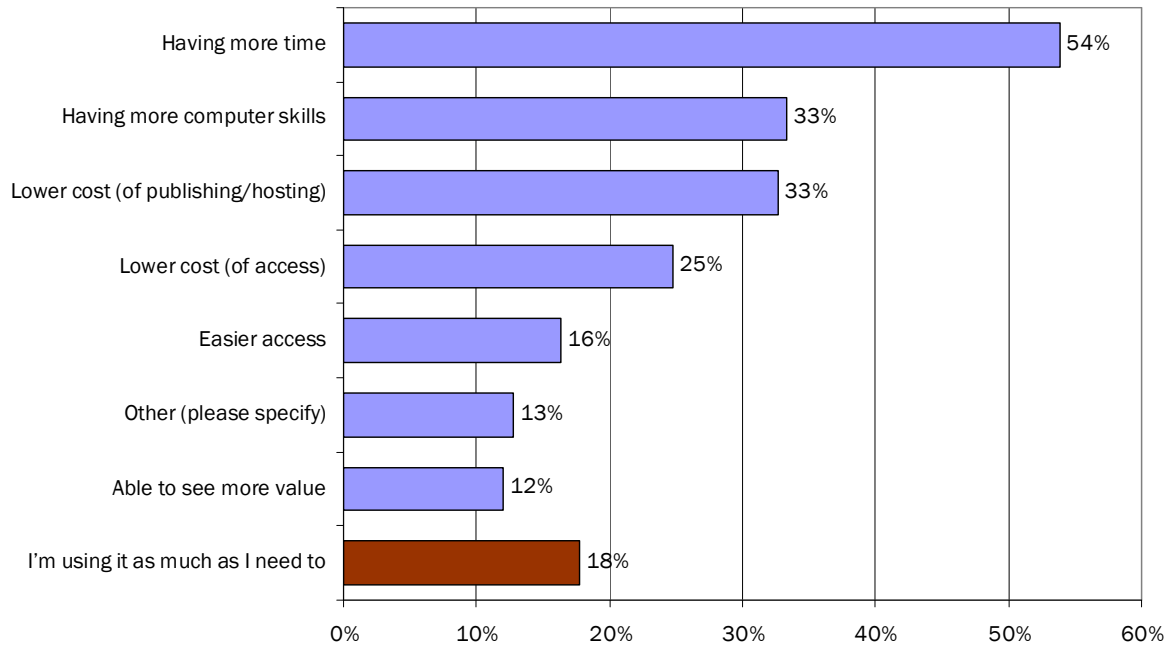
It's part of my routine everyday work practices [S106].

As with the personal internet uses described above, these comments reflect the value of the internet for connecting with group members or stakeholders, publicising a community group or connecting with similar groups elsewhere.

## **5.8.1 Barriers to Increased use of the Internet for Community**

### **Activities**

Barriers relating to personal use of the internet have already been described. However, as Figure 25 shows, there were a number of factors that prevent respondents using the internet more for their community activities. Of the 141 respondents, 73% (103) identified one or more barrier to more effective use of the internet in their community activity. Only 18% (25) of all respondents indicated that they used the internet enough for community activity. The most frequently occurring barrier or issue preventing the respondents from making greater use of the internet was 'the need for more time' (54% of all respondents), followed by 'the need for more computer skills' (33%) and then lower cost of publishing (33%). Only 12% (17) stated that they needed to see greater value in the internet before they would use it more (only two of whom also said they used it enough at present) and 16% (23) cite a requirement for easier access.



**Figure 25: What would encourage you to use the internet more to publish information about your community or a voluntary organisation that you're involved with (n=141)?**

Specific barriers to greater use of the internet identified by respondents were primarily related to the perceived value to the respondents relative to the time and effort needed, including the internet being recognised as useful (and being used) by others. The following comments are indicative:

The critical mass factor - knowing others are bound to use it [S14];

Someone else with skills to manage it [S28];

Ability to share maintenance with more people as content is time consuming [S151];

Having time in my day [S112]; and

Knowing that the work involved actually is valuable and accessed by others - currently it seems that a lot of web based information is lost on most people [S55].

One downside alluded to was the risk of information overload, namely

being convinced that there was a need to see what I was publishing - there's a lot of repetition and misinformation [S152].

As well as the skills of the producer, the quality of the tools used was identified as a barrier by three respondents:

More skills in website production [S97];

Upskilling in open source software, better equipment, esp[ecially] internet radio [S138];  
and

Better software [S35].

## 5.8.2 Summary

The foregoing results indicate that use of the internet could add value to the community activities of the respondents. The results indicated that respondents used the internet as a tool for gathering information and resources but, as with personal use, the internet also played a significant role in enabling communication both within groups and between groups, including those who were distanced in space and time. The results suggest that the internet was increasingly becoming a place where community information could be published and this in turn had the potential to challenge the hegemony of media and political elites. It was also found to be a tool for connecting communities to mainstream media and to government, suggesting it offered the potential to enhance community efforts to both work within current systems as well as to develop alternative voices outside of them. This presents an opportunity for participation that may well have been unavailable previously; as the New Zealand Digital Strategy reports, "content creation is not only a global business – now it can be anyone's business" (New Zealand Government, 2005, p.2). There were clearly barriers to enhanced use of the internet a community setting, the most significant of which is time. Skill levels and cost of access and publishing also emerged as a barrier to effective use.

## 5.9 Political and Democratic Activity

Despite the literature discussed in Chapter 2 suggesting a general decline in political interest, a lowering of awareness of politics issues amongst citizens, and a concomitant reduction in their perceived ability to influence government, the data suggested that this was not the case for the respondents in this survey. One factor that motivated participation was being able to affect the outcome of a decision and, as Table 25 shows, 91% (124) of respondents considered that they could exert influence or some influence over the government. Awareness of political issues was also strong amongst the respondents, with 48% (65) identifying themselves as being 'very aware' and only 5% (7) claiming to be 'not very aware'. This data supports research sub-questions 1.3 and 1.6:

- SQ1.3 What motivates citizens to become involved in the democratic process?
- SQ1.6 What is the basic social process influencing the adoption of eDemocracy practices?

Table 25: Perceived ability to influence government and political awareness (n=136)

		How would you describe your general awareness of political issues?				
		Not very aware	Somewhat aware	Very aware	Total	Percentage
Do you believe the statement 'whatever I say or do, I can't influence government'?	No	2	39	45	86	63%
	Somewhat	3	21	14	38	28%
	Yes	2	4	6	12	9%
	Total	7	64	65	136	
	Percentage	5%	47%	48%		

The political activity of respondents over the last three years, shown in Table 26, reveals that 89% (125; n=141) had discussed politics with friends or colleagues and 87% (122) had followed a political issue or debate in the media. Although it is of interest that only 55% (77) had visited a political party website. The respondent cohort was more likely to vote than the general population was, particularly in local government elections. The 83% (117) who voted in a national election was slightly above the national average for central government elections, which stood at 79% (IDEA, 2002). The 88% (124) who voted in a local election was higher than the level of voting activity seen across New Zealand as a whole, where voter

turnout at local elections in 1998 was 57.5%. In Waitakere City, the 1998 voter turnout was 45% (Gravitas, 2003), falling to 35% for the 2004 election (Cox, 2004). In some contrast 93% (25) of the respondents in this survey who were resident in Waitakere City indicated that they had voted in the 2004 election.

Whilst only 4% (6) of respondents stood for political office in the last three years, 18% (26) were members of a political party and 49% (69) attended a political meeting, slightly higher than the 13.3% figure for political membership in the mid-1990s World Values Study (Norris, 2002). Sixty percent of respondents (84) attended a meeting of either local, regional or central government elected representatives.

Table 26: Political activity in the last three years (n=141).

Activity	Respondents	Percentage
Discuss politics with friends, family or colleagues?	125	89%
Vote in a local election?	124	88%
Follow a political issue or debate in the media?	122	87%
Vote in a national election?	117	83%
Attend a formal meeting of elected representatives (council meeting or select committee)?	84	60%
Visit a political party's website?	77	55%
Attend a political meeting?	69	49%
Join (or renew membership) of a political party?	26	18%
Actively canvas on behalf of a political party or candidate?	25	18%
Stand for political office?	6	4%

### 5.9.1 Use of the internet to Support Political Activity

The foregoing results suggest that the respondents were generally engaged in democratic practices within their communities. It was shown earlier in this chapter that the respondents considered that ICT contributed positively to their private and community activities, the next section will look at how respondents used the internet specifically in relation to their political and democratic activity and will explore how the internet was used to make submissions to political processes (research sub-question 1.6).

By far the most widely used online medium to find out about government or political issues were websites. As can be seen in Table 27 these were used by 87% (122).



Table 27: Online media used to support political activity (n=141).

Medium	Respondents	Percentage
Website	122	87%
Email newsletter	84	60%
Email discussion list	28	20%
internet newsgroups	27	19%
Other	26	18%
internet-based discussion forum	21	15%
Weblog (Blog)	12	9%
Online chat	8	6%

The medium used least was online chat, which was used by 6% (8) of respondents. Table 28 shows that the level of political activity of the respondent does not appear make much difference to the way they used the internet to find out about government and politics (based on respondents who attended a political meeting).

Table 28: Choice of online media versus attendance at a political meeting.

Medium	Attended a political meeting			
	Yes (n=68)		No (n=73)	
Website	59	87%	63	86%
internet newsgroups	16	24%	11	15%
internet based discussion forum	9	13%	12	16%
Weblog (Blog)	8	12%	4	5%
Online chat	4	6%	4	5%
Email newsletter	37	54%	47	64%
Email discussion list	13	19%	15	21%
Other	11	16%	15	21%

Whilst 18% (26) of respondents identify 'other' ways of keeping informed, all but four of these involved traditional media or personal/community networking. The four exceptions noted by respondents were:

- Email from Government Departments.
- Email to individual politicians and staff.
- Google News alert service.
- Wiki.

Fewer respondents used the internet to publish political material and to make comments about government or political issues than view it online. Of the 23% (32) of respondents who identified other methods of publishing, only 10 involved the internet (seven who sent personal emails to politicians, print media or friends in support of a political issue; one who used a Wiki and two who used online petitions). One other respondent noted in the ‘other’ field that they had used none of media listed because their job as a public servant prevented them from doing so. Of the media that were used for publishing, email was by far the most popular (23% have published to an email discussion list and 22% had used an email newsletter). Blogs (4%) and Chat (4%) were least likely to be used for publishing and internet newsgroups were used by only 9% of respondents, as Table 29 shows.

Table 29: Online media used to publish opinion on government or politics (n=141).

Media	Respondents	Percentage
Website	50	35%
internet newsgroups	12	9%
internet based discussion forum	15	11%
Weblog (Blog)	6	4%
Online chat	5	4%
Email newsletter	31	22%
Email discussion list	33	23%
Other	32	23%

The respondents’ used the internet for obtaining government or political information and, to a lesser degree, for publishing their own comments and opinions on government and political issues. Figure 26 shows that respondents overwhelmingly indicated that the internet made them more aware of topical issues.

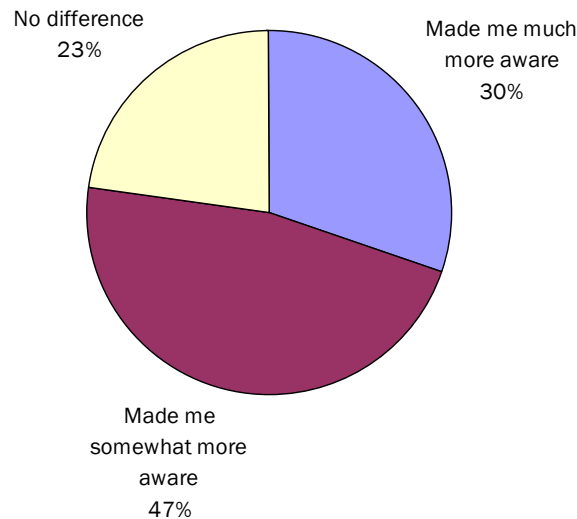


Figure 26: Impact of the internet on topical awareness (n=132).

The respondent's perception of how the internet affected their level of topical awareness appears to make only a slight difference as to whether they indicate that the impact of the internet has been positive in this regard. Amongst the 48% respondents who identified themselves as politically aware, 71% stated that they had become more aware as a result of the internet and 25% stated that it had made no difference to their level of topical awareness. Availability of the internet did not appear to make a difference to the level of involvement in political activities for 47% of respondents (n=135). However, it appears possible that the internet has led to increased levels of involvement for 53% of respondents. No respondent suggested using the internet had reduced their level of involvement in political activities.

The internet was seen by 59% of respondents (80; n=135) as helping them to influence key decision-makers but it made no difference to 37% (50). Four percent of respondents (5) expressed the opinion that the internet did not help them to exert influence over key decision-makers.

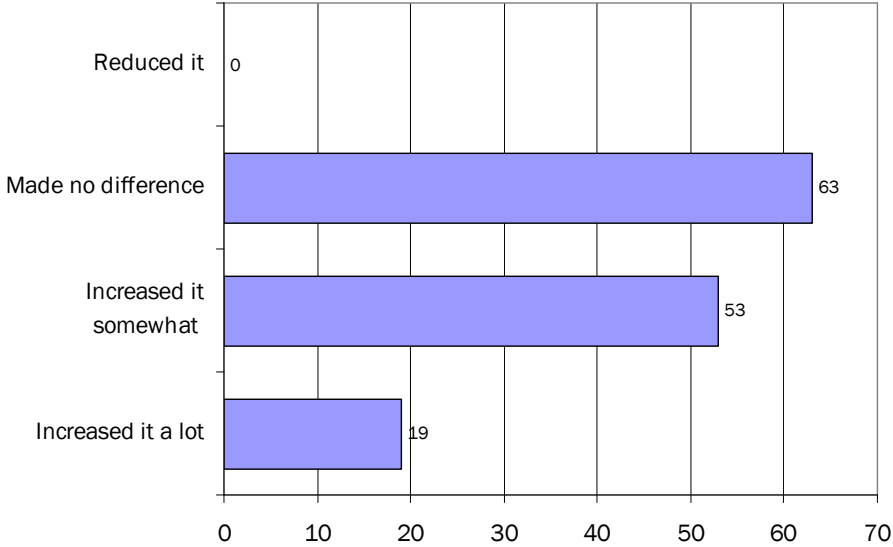


Figure 27: Has your use of the internet affected your level of involvement in political activities (n=135)?

### 5.9.2 Making Submissions

The previous category explored the way respondents used the internet for political activity purposes: Accessing published material or publishing material oneself. This section reports how respondents used the internet to contact or make submissions to local and central government and relates this to research sub-question 1.2 (what processes exist for community engagement, consultation and development). Table 30 shows that most respondents (61%) had contacted either a local, regional or national elected representative in the past year and that 20% had done so on six or more occasions.

Table 30: How many times did you contact an elected representative about a community issue in the last year (n=135)?

	Respondents	Percentage
None	52	39%
1 or 2 times	37	27%
3 to 5 times	19	14%
6 or more times	27	20%

Public submissions form an important part of the democratic process for both local and central government. Forty three percent of respondents (61) had made a written submission to local government and 16% (23) an oral submission (this would normally be made to support a written submission). At central government level, 33% (46) had made written

submissions and 9% (12) appeared in person before a select committee, consultation hui/meeting or other government consultation forum. Figure 28 show respondent's use of the internet to make submissions. Email was the most popular media, used by 33% (46) of respondents to make local submissions and 28% (40) to make national submissions. However, 12% (locally) and 11% (nationally) of respondents indicate that electronic submissions were not available to them and 22% (locally) and 23% (nationally) chose not to make an electronic submission. Only one respondent had used text messaging to make a submission.

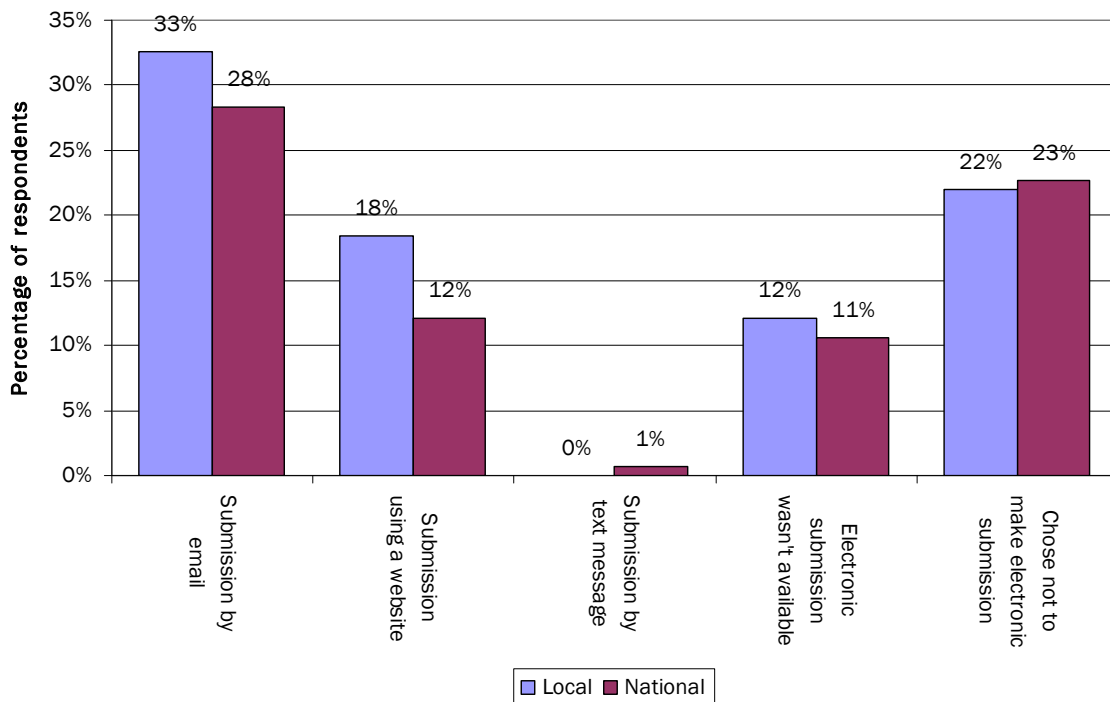


Figure 28: Choice of electronic submission methods (local and nation; n=141).

### 5.9.3 Summary

The foregoing results suggest that respondents are motivated to be involved in democratic life and that most were likely to exercise their democratic franchise and were actively taking part in political discussions. The majority of respondents used the internet for information gathering and research and this translates into the political arena, where most respondents saw the internet (and particularly websites) as making them more aware of political issues. Whilst fewer respondents published political material online, one third did so using a website and a quarter through email. Keeping informed and up to date emerged as a major

theme form. The majority of respondents indicated that the internet helped them to be better informed and that access to the internet increased their level of political involvement. Extending this theme, respondents also indicated that the internet made it easier for them to influence key decision-makers, either directly or through electronic submissions.

### 5.10 eDemocracy

Research sub-question 1.1 asks “What is understood to be meant by the terms eDemocracy, eGovernment and eGovernance”. Respondents were asked consider a number of pre-defined activities and state whether or not they considered these to be part of an eDemocracy framework. As Table 31 shows, the majority of respondents considered that all of the items listed in this part of the survey were components of eDemocracy, including ‘accessing a government service online’, which was identified by 84% (112) of respondents. ‘Improving access to information’ was seen by most respondents (91% or 122 respondents) as being a component of eDemocracy; this was followed by ‘making submissions’ and ‘reviewing policy documents’ (both 90%; 122). The activity considered by the fewest respondents to be a component of eDemocracy was ‘ensuring equal access to computers and the internet’, which 15% (20) of respondents indicated was not a part of eDemocracy and 19% (25) were unsure. Despite this, 63% (85) considered it to be a component of eDemocracy. ‘Online voting’ was also seen as being a part of eDemocracy by 69% (92) of respondents.

Table 31: Components of eDemocracy (n=134).

	Yes	No	Not sure	Not answered
Improving access to information	91%	3%	6%	0%
Making submissions	90%	2%	6%	2%
Reviewing policy documents	90%	3%	5%	2%
Being informed through access to information and archives	89%	3%	7%	1%
Reading submissions others have made	85%	4%	5%	5%
Emailing government/council officials	84%	3%	8%	4%
Accessing government services online	84%	8%	7%	1%
Influencing decisions that affect your community	82%	6%	10%	1%
Emailing politicians	81%	5%	8%	5%
Discussing issues with others online or by email	77%	9%	10%	4%
Online voting	69%	10%	16%	5%
Ensuring equal access to computers and the internet	63%	15%	19%	3%

Table 31 illustrates that the most commonly agreed upon components of eDemocracy were passive channels for receiving information, including 'improving access to information' and 'reviewing policy documents' (although 'making submissions' was clearly an exception). The foregoing results are further considered in Chapter 8 when discussing models for emergent local eDemocracy and online engagement. As Witschge (2002) suggests, there is an inherent tendency amongst internet users in the political domain to seek out information that supports pre-held beliefs and to communicate with like-minded people, thus avoiding conflict. It is worth noting that 'Submission making' also rank's highly (Table 31). However, the data shows that only 43% of respondents had made a submission to local government and 33% to central government in the last 12 months, suggesting that the motivation or opportunity to engage in active problem solving and the dissemination of personally held or community-oriented opinion was less than the theoretical importance that is placed on it. Perhaps those within a democracy, take the process for granted or become disenfranchised through the application of democratic processes? This could be a reflection on the fact that there is a pattern of citizen disengagement from democratic processes (Norris, 2002; Putnam, 2000) and that these processes, whether physical or virtual, fail to function as an ideal public sphere in which discourse and debate are privileged (Witschge, 2002).

The matters discussed in this section can be presented schematically as depicted in Figure 29. Such a representation reveals that the predominance of passive online activity described above was also mirrored in patterns of personal and community internet usage (see Table 23 and Table 24 above). The above purports a view that the majority of internet activities involve the reception or the acquisition of pre-existing information, rather than the active publication or dissemination of new ideas, information or knowledge.

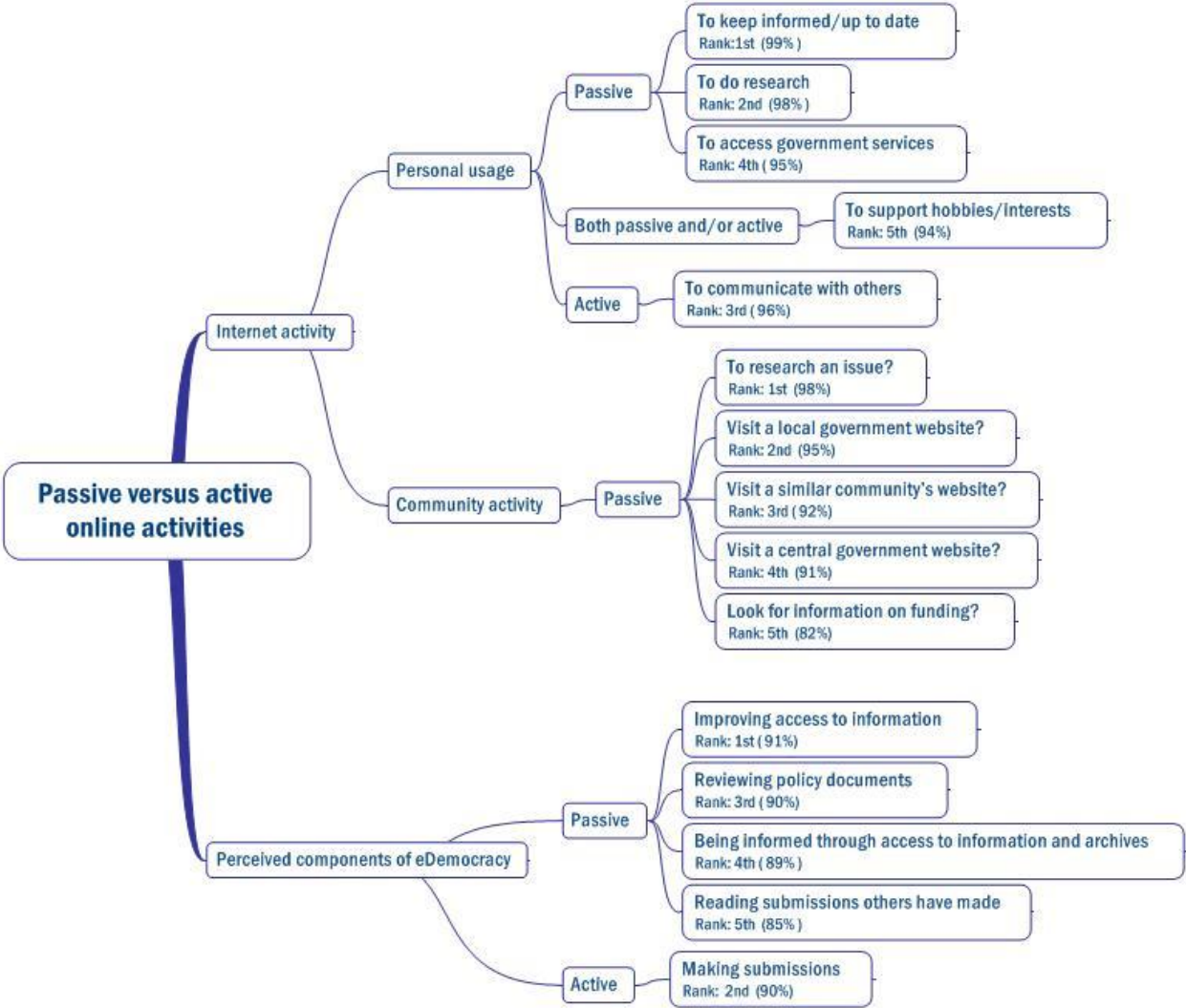


Figure 29: Passive versus active online activities<sup>55</sup>

### 5.10.1 Qualitative Themes

Survey respondents were asked to state in their own words what else eDemocracy involved within their own understanding. A thematic analysis of 71 responses was undertaken in which responses were grouped into categories according to the themes within them and those categories then merged to develop broad categories or key themes. Twelve key themes emerged from the 71 responses. These are shown in Figure 30 and reveal six themes that

<sup>55</sup> The term ‘passive’ is used here to refer to obtaining pre-existing information and ‘active’ to refer to originating new information, through publication or communication.



describe positive aspects of eDemocracy, three that propose negative aspects and three that are value neutral.

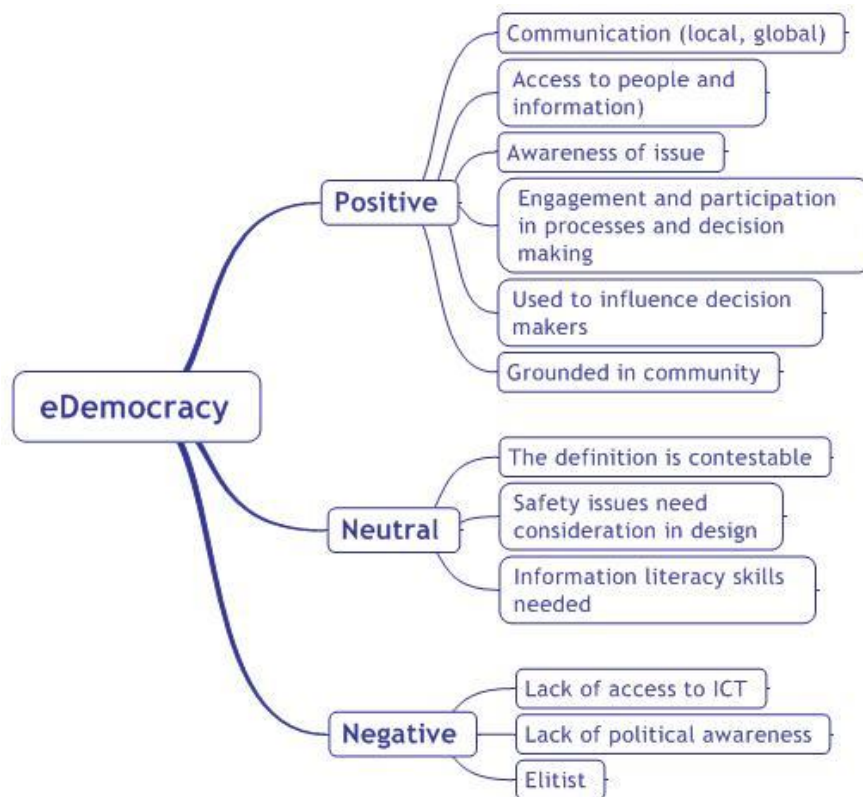


Figure 30: Emerging eDemocracy themes.

### 5.10.1.1 Positive Themes

Responses that suggest positive attributes towards eDemocracy, construct it as a being grounded in the community: Where eGovernment is delivered from the centre out, eDemocracy initiatives occur in the community. Indeed, whilst consultation can occur at any level, the process was only considered to be 'eDemocracy' when it is grounded in a consultative and inclusive approach such that it

focuses more on community, and the active involvement of community, so anything that encourages active participation in the community can be defined as e-democracy [S73].

A major theme to emerge regarding the definition of eDemocracy was 'engagement' and participation in the processes of government; including access to the decision-making processes themselves. This involved the potential to speed up access and improve

availability through the use of online tools and the need for such processes to be collaborative and open to all. Respondents also alluded to the potential for expanding the extent of consultation, for networking both within existing social and community networks and beyond,

developing new groups or improving existing groups to enable them to lobby government more effectively. Developing networks between lobby groups with similar aims nationwide and internationally to work together more effectively [S34].

It was noted by respondents that eDemocracy offered the ability to reduce power imbalances and create a more facilitative and inclusive approach to consultation

changing the role of government so that the bureaucrats become facilitators rather than top down control freaks [S48].

For one participant, eDemocracy:

allows people to take part in influencing political decision-making that affects their personal lives... eDemocracy involves access to quality information easily irrespective of location [S89].

Access was a key theme identified in the comments below by a number of respondents, including the ability of the internet to provide citizens with timely access to information, to make submissions and be heard. The breadth of access was considered important; ICT was seen to have the potential to make topical information more available and from a wider range of sources, providing

access to works giving a wide view of political principles and history of political affairs [S4].

eDemocracy means the ICT technology is available for everybody and it is going to be another vehicle to promote equity and transparency; allow people to learn, research, participate, send, receive, request and share [S118]; and

eDemocracy is equal access to information and opportunity for feedback [S151].

Responses suggest that eDemocracy was seen as a way of breaking down barriers to participation in the democratic process. It is a way of connecting citizens to decision-makers more effectively and efficiently but also had potential to hold elected officials and particularly bureaucrats more accountable for their actions. eDemocracy was a way of being more involved in the process of government

influencing what happens at the local and community levels as well as at the national level [S15].

eDemocracy offered

the chance to restructure the roles and relationships between the elected representatives, the bureaucracy and citizens [S137].

Communication was reported to be an important aspect eDemocracy, for example the ability to create timely and rapid links with like-minded individuals, groups or communities either locally or globally in order to contest issues, raise awareness or become resourced

developing networks between lobby groups with similar aims nationwide and internationally to work together more effectively [S34].

The dissemination of information was rated as important by respondents and comments were made as to the controls that could be placed on this, particularly where the primary source was a commercial media organisation. The internet was seen as offering some potential to counter this hegemony. One respondent likened the potential of the internet to the posting of newspapers in public parks, and a number emphasised the importance of political awareness and understanding that

communication is the most important activity that people can be involved in to gain knowledge that influences their political understanding. Lenin advocated for an all Russia newspaper that was made in pages, stuck on walls, etc. to enlighten people about the economic and political state of their country and internationally. eDemocracy gives up to date information and the opportunity to advance ideas to whoever will read them [S35].

eDemocracy, it was suggested, offered the potential to increase the topical and political awareness of citizens and to motivate those not currently involved in their communities to become more active, leading to

a generally more aware community as some people will respond through the net that would not bother to otherwise [S16].

#### **5.10.1.2 Neutral Themes**

Respondents provided comments that suggested some aspects of eDemocracy were neither positive nor negative *per se* but were required for eDemocracy to succeed. These can be grouped into three themes:

- The definition is contestable and so this could result in corruption of the term if it is misused by those in positions of power (for example the media or state).
- Issues of safety need to be considered in the design of eDemocracy systems such that user's rights and privacy are protected and that citizens can state strongly held beliefs without fear or danger.
- For eDemocracy to be effective information, literacy skills are needed by all citizens.

#### **5.10.1.3 Negative Themes**

Respondent's comments also suggest that there were negative connotations to eDemocracy and, most notably, this included the risk of it becoming elitist. As one respondent suggested, much like the agora of Ancient Greece, what on the outside appears to be a perfect democratic process can exclude a significant proportion of the population from taking part. In the case of the agora in Greece, it is worthwhile remembering that only land-owning men could participate. In 21st Century New Zealand, the barriers are more subtle but

nevertheless remain and these include a well developed understanding of the issues (embedded through education, acceptable social discourse, and developed interest), access to and affordability of, broadband internet connections, access to ICT and the skills to use them. In this survey, lack of political or civic awareness was cited as a negative in that eDemocracy *per se* did not overcome this and therefore awareness raising needs to occur alongside the development of eDemocracy tools. Access to ICT and the information they carried was not evenly distributed or ubiquitous and those without access become further marginalised as models of eDemocracy emerge,

in this instance membership of the demos is restricted to those with money to ensure access, technical skills, time to search for information, and the belief that they are valued by a society [S26].

## 5.10.2 Summary

In response to the question ‘what is understood to be meant by the terms eDemocracy, eGovernment and eGovernance’, the data suggests that the perception amongst respondents was that it referred to the use of electronic channels to replicate existing physical activities and processes. The data suggests that eDemocracy (specifically discussed in the section above), , was seen to be about getting closer to government (and vice versa); about the effective and timely provision of information, the availability of alternative channels for consultation and the ability to communicate with officials and elected representatives. Whilst important, it was seen as being less about voting and providing equality of access to ICT. However, lack of equal access and the potential for a technology-enabled democratic divide was seen as a potential negative consequence of eDemocracy. Much of the literature on eDemocracy notes the contestable nature of the concept (for example, S. Coleman, 2004b) and this data supports this position. The foregoing results suggest that respondents saw eDemocracy as an opportunity to reconstruct the traditional and increasingly exclusionary roles of politicians and bureaucrats and to redefine democratic processes to be more strongly grounded in community. The results suggest that eDemocracy, offered the opportunity for greater participation but also offered hope for greater importance to be placed on the value of that participation. eDemocracy was seen as being at risk of being corrupted by those who

sought to maintain existing power structures and a lack of political and civil awareness presented a problem when attempting to increase democratic participation. Hence, there is a risk that eDemocracy models simply recreate the status quo online or create further alienation by being seen as inaccessible and elitist.

## 5.11 Discussion of Survey Findings

The presentation of results and discussion above has provided an overview of the demographics of the survey participants and in part at least, provided data to answer research question 1, 'What impact does ICT have on facilitating democratic processes?' The survey instrument set out to describe a 'broad-brush' picture of ICT usage, community activity and political involvement amongst users of ICT who were also active in the community and voluntary sector in New Zealand. These data are intended to contribute to answering research question 2, 'what is an appropriate model for describing the processes required to establish and sustain the effective use of ICT in local democratic processes?' The key findings from the survey were:

- ICT was an important tool in the community and voluntary sector in New Zealand for providing support and resources to a wide range of individuals and civil society groups. The level of ICT usage amongst the cohort was higher than for the population as a whole, as was the level of internet usage when connecting with Government.
- ICT was being used innovatively and successfully to communicate, research, resource, engage and promote within groups and amongst wider sometimes geographically dispersed communities of interest.
- When compared to overseas studies (Putnam & Goss, 2002), the respondents demonstrated high levels of social capital and social connectedness was demonstrated in both their on- and off-line activities.
- ICT played an important role in facilitating community engagement within the civil society sector and between civil society and government agencies. Specifically, they allowed citizens to be more informed, provide greater and more timely, access to

information, allowed citizens to publish alternative viewpoints and increased the ability to influence decision-makers.

- Immediacy of access appeared to be an important factor in effective use. The findings suggest that citizens and communities who lacked immediate access to ICT at home or at work were less likely to incorporate ICT into their activities and were more likely to view it as less useful. This suggests the existence of an access deficit, whereby those who lacked immediate access to ICT were less able to realise the benefits it offered.
- Respondents identified both time and the cost of access as barriers to increased use of computers and the internet and to the sustainability of CI initiatives that they were involved with. Time was also perceived as a barrier to increasing skills and knowledge.
- There was a strong affirmation of the potential value of eDemocracy, with the majority of respondents commenting favourably on it. However, there were also concerns raised that suggest eDemocracy projects must be cognisant of becoming elitist and must be embedded in the communities that they serve. Respondents viewed the delivery of government services as a core part of the democratic process, not simply as a transaction as is suggested in the majority of literature.
- eDemocracy offered the potential to improve the quality of access and the quality of information that was available, in turn making the democratic process more available, accountable and transparent for citizens. Participation was a key theme to emerge, including timely and appropriate access to information and the opportunity for active involvement in the democratic process.

The preliminary findings highlight the importance and impact of ICT in facilitating community engagement within the civil society sector and with government agencies and that social trust and reciprocity amongst the cohort appear high in this regard. Respondents were politically aware and active, comfortable with their ability to exert influence over government. Ninety five percent of respondents used the internet to connect with Government. Eighty eight percent accessed a central government website as part of their community activity and 92% accessed a local government website. This contrasts with a

recent study of methods used to contact government in New Zealand where 28% used the internet (Curtis, Vowles, & Curtis, 2004).

Social capital is a strong indicator of levels of democratic involvement (Norris, 2002) and the cohort in this study exhibited characteristics of strong social capital. The survey results suggest that they were well connected with neighbours and communities of interest, both online and offline. ICT has clearly become an important tool in supporting activities in the community and voluntary sector, enhancing the extent and quality of social networks amongst the respondents.

The community sector does not generally appear to be seen as a leader in the adoption of ICT, yet both computer and internet uptake amongst the respondents occurred earlier than the researcher had anticipated based on other available data. The results show that adoption was strongly motivated by the perceived value of the technology in the context of the user's everyday life, not by technology itself. The reported levels of usage, length of adoption and reported levels of expertise, suggests that the respondents were realising value from computers and the internet. However, the findings suggest that effective ICT usage amongst communities in New Zealand was hard to sustain due to a lack of time and skills. The findings also suggest that ICT offers some benefits to the time-poor.

Immediacy of access appears to be an important factor in effective use as ICT becomes more ubiquitous, suggesting that there was a potential access deficit for citizens and communities who lack ICT at home or work. Current government policy (Community Employment Group, 2002; New Zealand Government, 2005) remains biased towards projects rather than process or sustainability and it is not apparent how the key issues identified here can be addressed at a national level. although it is noted that the Digital Strategy does allocate \$21m of funding for CI projects between 2005 and 2010.

Given the newness of eDemocracy and the contestability of the term, it was a surprise to the researcher to see such strong affirmation of the processes that respondents considered to be eDemocracy. Only one respondent said they did not understand the term and one other



commented on the contestable nature of the term. An overwhelming majority of respondents (84%) considered accessing government services online to be a part of eDemocracy. From the literature discussed in Chapter 2, this aspect has been considered as a component of eGovernment, however, the data suggests that respondents either viewed delivery of government services as a core part of the democratic process and not simply as a transaction or that they were unable to differentiate between the two (respondents were not asked about eGovernment *per se*). Participation was a key theme to emerge in the respondents understanding of eDemocracy, including timely and appropriate access to information, from a wide range of sources, as well as the ability to make timely submissions and be actively involved in the democratic process and was not seen simply in as how individuals participated. Many responses related to civil society as a whole becoming more engaged and able to participate. Communication and networking were seen to be enhanced by eDemocracy and it had the potential to lead to an increase in political awareness amongst citizens. 'Bureaucracy' and 'technocracy' were seen as counter-intuitive to strong democracy. Views were expressed that eDemocracy had the potential to increase transparency, making make governments (both elected representatives and bureaucrats) not only more accountable for their decisions but more likely to consult and to be responsiveness to the outcome of that consultation. Risks were seen to relate to efficacy of access and these mirrored the more general findings with regard to the emergence of a nation divided by its ability to digitally engage with democracy. However, it was clear that overall the respondents felt eDemocracy could improve the quality of access and information, making the democracy process more available, accountable and transparent (and hopefully, more relevant) for citizens.

## 5.12 Conclusion

ICT is now a key tool in the community and voluntary sector in New Zealand, supporting and helping to resource a wide range of civil society groups. Although barriers to more effective use clearly exist, ICT is being used innovatively and successfully to communicate, research, resource, engage and promote. The findings suggest that the internet was more likely to be a source of information than a publishing destination for new ideas or individual views, although this was happening. The findings warrants further exploration of concepts

that move beyond effective use to identify how ICT can be used to support citizen-centric solutions for effective engagement and this aspect will be explored in the second part of the study.

The findings presented here raise questions of how, where and through what media, citizens engage with each other and with government. They suggest a strong motivation amongst the cohort for supplementing existing democratic processes with new digital ones but also point to barriers that must be overcome, including immediacy of access, information literacy and affordability. The New Zealand Government's Digital Strategy (New Zealand Government, 2005) recognises the increasing importance of ICT in community settings and these findings suggest further research is required to identify how ICT can be used to support citizen-centric solutions for effective engagement and methods developed to encourage the adoption of ICT for democratic purpose.

In the next chapter, the development of the interview instrument for the Phase II of this mixed methods study and the methodology, GTM, are discussed. The findings presented in this chapter will inform the conclusions developed in this foregoing discussion.

# Chapter 6 – Research Design: Interviews

## 6.1 Introduction

Data collection occurred in two sequential stages in this mixed methods study. The survey instrument provided an analysis and discussion of the qualitative and quantitative findings from the survey and the data obtained from this phase of the study was analysed and used to support the development of this second phase, an interview instrument. This chapter describes the methodologically approach to Phase II, namely grounded theory methodology (GTM), which is applied within the research framework described in Chapter 3.

The first section of this chapter will describe the origins and historical context of GTM, including a discussion on the theoretical differences between Glaser and Strauss. The GTM process is then described with reference to concepts of discovery, conceptualisation and the assessment of emergent theory. The inductive nature and deductive components of GTM are considered and the use of the constant comparative method described. This is followed by an explanation of the use of memos and diagrams in theory development and a discussion on the evaluation of a *grounded theory* and of procedural rigour. There then follows a description of the design of the interview instrument.

## 6.2 Grounded Theory Methodology

GTM was selected because it is a primarily inductive method of data analysis that gives emphasis to the discovery process within theory development, contrasting with the more traditional process of deductively generating results from pre-established theoretical frameworks. The generation of new theory is driven by constantly emerging data, the collection of which is dependent on the emerging theoretical constructs. Such processes are

cyclical in nature and suited to the production of a substantive theory that can explain how a perceived problem is to be resolved, focussing on social processes and the strategies employed by the participants (Glaser, 1992). The theory that is developed extends beyond a set of findings to offer some explanation of the phenomena being studied and can be considered to be:

A set of well-developed categories (such as themes and concepts) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains some relevant [social phenomena] (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.22).

### 6.2.1 Historical Context

GTM was originally developed in 1967 by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. Their aim was to develop a rigorous qualitative methodology that generated theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). GTM became more established during the 1980s when qualitative research moved from a post-positivist framework to one that acknowledged multiple realities (Benoliel, 1996). GTM emerged from the symbolic interactionist tradition of sociology, where research focuses on the significance and meaning of events for individuals and how that meaning is conveyed (Hutchinson, 1993). Wuest (1995) observed that an underlying tenet of symbolic interactionism is one of respect for a person's subjective interpretation of a social experience as a source of knowledge. This connection is not only to the individual experience but also to the transformative and pedagogical potential of the experience, making GTM suitable for use in research that focuses on understanding how individuals can be emancipated from oppressive situations through personal transformation and the establishment of social movements.

GTM is the discovery of theory from data that has been systematically obtained and analysed and where theory generation is based on a process of comparative analysis. A grounded theory is generated directly from the data rather than by logical deduction based on *a priori* assumptions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). GTM places primary importance on the research process occurring in a natural setting and data being obtained from a wide variety of sources, which can include participant observation, interviews, the researcher's own notes

and other secondary documents (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), which is seen by the researcher as being compatible with this research. As an interpretive methodology, GTM goes beyond data to view the researcher as a social being involved in the social processes. Even past experiences are data and it is this acknowledgement of socially constructed power-relations that makes GTM consistent with an epistemology based on CST, since the researcher is seen as being a participant in the process and able to effect change (Boudreau, 1997).

No effort is made on the part of the researcher to put aside ideas or assumptions, in fact the reverse is true in that, as Glaser (1992) observed, such personal material and observations are collated in a journal or through memoing by the researcher.

GTM is not a descriptive method; it does not set out to provide a description of what the researcher finds, rather it is an emergent method that begins with a broad purpose of determining what is happening within a particular area of interest and then provides a way of explaining and identifying the social and psychosocial processes occurring within a particular social situation through the development not of descriptors but of theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It is, as Baker, Wuest and Stern (1992) suggest, a process of moving beyond description to discovery. The resulting grounded theory is one that is inductively obtained from the research of the phenomenon that is represented (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Theory is discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis and theory are reciprocally related to each other. Within this context, there are four main criteria that can be used to assess the appropriateness of a theory to a phenomenon: fit, understanding, generality and control (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The generation of theory occurs through comparative analysis, which Glaser and Strauss (1967) note is a widely used term within social sciences and can also be used as a generic term in a similar fashion to experimental or statistical methods. This is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. From a GTM perspective, the definition of comparative analysis needs to be further refined to describe a strategic method for generating theory from the data

within the research, whatever size that research might be. According to Straus and Corbin (1998), comparisons can be either:

- Incident/object to incident/object; or
- Abstract concept [category] to abstract concept [category]

Comparison can take two forms, 'flip flop' or 'systematic':

**Flip-flop comparison**      Inverting the data to look at opposites in order to identify significant properties. For example, if one has observed immediacy of access to ICT as a factor for effective use, what impact might a lack of access have as a barrier to adoption or use?

**Systematic comparison**      This involves comparing data to literature or to an event from the researcher's own experience. Systematic comparison serves to sensitise the researcher to properties or attributes of the data that might otherwise be overlooked because the researcher was not aware of what to look for. It is important to recognise here that the significance lies in "how often this concept emerges and what it looks like under varying conditions," not simply how many individuals exhibit the concept (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.96)

### 6.2.1.1 Glaser versus Strauss

There are two key proponents of GTM, Glaser and Strauss. Divergence in their definitions of GTM dates back to Strauss' publications in the mid-1980s and is cemented with the publication of his 1990 book with Juliet Corbin (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Whilst both theoretical approaches retain the 'grounded theory' name, they are considered to be fundamentally different in their approach. Indeed, Glaser has attempted to differentiate between the two approaches through re-labelling Strauss and Corbin's approach as

'conceptual description' (Glaser, 1992), highlighting what Glaser sees as the most significant difference and in effect he suggests that this is necessary since Strauss and Corbin abandon what he believes to be the core precept of GTM analysis, namely emergence. He argues that 'conceptual description' simply forces data into pre-established frameworks. However, whilst Straus and Corbin argue for a systematic approach to analysis and (contrary to Glaser) consider the role of prior knowledge to be both relevant and important, they strongly endorses procedures which ensure that such previously held opinions or ideas are not forced upon the data. As Strauss and Corbin observe, "it is not the researcher's perception or perspective that matters but how research participants see events or happenings" (p.47).

Having made this distinction between Glaser's approach to GTM and Strauss's approach, it is worth noting that this research uses some of the core precepts of GTM without attempting to be methodologically rigid. In doing so it uses relevant concepts from both sides, although it privileges Strauss' approach as being more appropriate to this research, as it is situated within a body of literature where issues of power and control are acknowledged, suggesting that the research subject does not exist in isolation but as part of wider public spheres.

## 6.2.2 Undertaking a GTM Project

Yee (2001) describes an approach to undertaking a GTM project based on processes originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Yee's framework, shown in an extended form in Figure 31, recognises that there are three distinct phases within the theory building process, these are:

- Discovery;
- conceptualisation; and
- assessment.

The process is iterative in that the researcher is encouraged to return to previous phases until saturation is achieved and the theory 'complete' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Data must be collected, however, GTM is often vague and this part of the process is poorly-defined at a

theoretical level and subject to disagreement amongst the principle originators of the method (Charmaz, 2000).

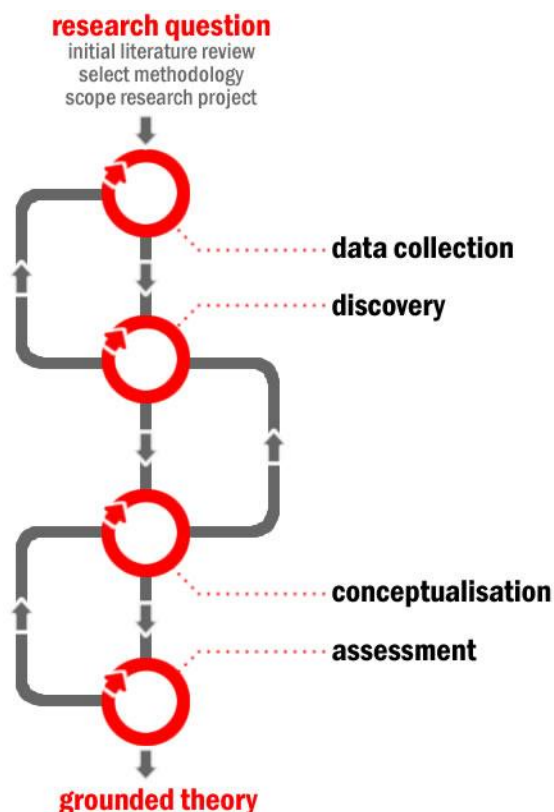


Figure 31: Grounded theory methodology (GTM) process model.

As discussed in earlier chapters, it was realised during the design stage of this research that the new and emerging nature of eDemocracy in a regional setting would mean that there was limited prior research in this field and that awareness of the issues would also be limited in the community being studied. A decision was made to use a sequential mixed methods study, whereby a broad survey of community ICT users would be used to develop the design of a second phase of localised data collection.

### 6.2.2.1 Discovery

During this stage the researcher is attempting to discover emerging phenomena and make meaning from the words, observed actions and emotions of participants in the research process. The researcher is a part of the social context of the research, allowing for observation and recording of the full richness of social cues and interaction as they occur in a natural setting. The researcher is observing the lived experience of participants through a rich



variety of interviewing, observation and related documentation in order to gain an insight into the world of the research participant and as such to begin to understand the behaviour and motivations of the actors within the research. The process is subjective in that it requires the researcher to recognise the social position and prior knowledge of both the participants and of themselves. However, subjectivity in the process is matched by what Straus and Corbin (1998) argue is objectivity in the data itself and what they refer to as the “reality of the data” (p.85). They suggest that objectivity is about retaining an “openness, a willingness to listen and to ‘give voice’ to the participants” (p.43).

### **6.2.2.2 Conceptualisation**

During the discovery phase the researcher is immersed in the research process and in the data being collected. The second phase in the GTM process requires the researcher to distance themselves from the data and to operate at a more conceptual level, with the aim of generating broader concepts. Distance from both the social context of the research project and from the immediacy of the data is obtained through the use of theoretical notes (memos) and diagrams. It is through the use of such memos that categories, and ultimately theory, will emerge and such memos also serve to guide the researcher with further data collection. This phase of the project is necessarily more objective.

### **6.2.2.3 Assessment**

Once data has been collected, analysed and conceptualised through the use of memoing and substantive coding, the researcher should finally be in a position to assess the conceptual description that emerges from the analysis. Glaser (2004) pragmatically suggests that if the ‘emergent theory’ contains concepts that fit, the data appears conceptually logical and it works then it is ‘valid’. Strauss and Corbin (1998), on the other hand, stress the necessity for rigour and for the verification of a theory.

## **6.2.3 Inductive Versus Deductive**

It is often suggested that GTM is purely inductive, in other words that relationships and ultimately theory develop solely from the data. Indeed, as Glaser (2004, p.2) states, “classic [grounded theory] is simply a set of integrated conceptual hypotheses systematically

generated to produce an inductive theory about a substantive area.” He argues that it is imperative to suspend theoretical explorations of preconceived ideas and problems such that theory can be allowed to “emerge conceptually by constant comparative analysis” (Glaser, 2004, p.8), arguing that when preconception is forced, the result is likely to be a non-emergent grounded theory that is the result of the researcher shaping theory to fit preconceived ideas. Conversely, Strauss and Corbin (1998), argue that much GTM has both inductive and deductive elements. Such duality results from the underlying fact that the researcher is constantly interpreting meaning and applying their own bias and preconceptions to the process of data analysis, acknowledging that, in reality, they cannot suspend all beliefs and pre-conceived ideas. These interpretations take the form of concepts and relationships, which are continuously validated by comparing existing data and codes with new data. Therefore, whilst GTM is most often described as an inductive method, in reality constraints of the academic or professional environment and other factors often ensure that it is in fact implemented as both an inductive and a deductive process.

## **6.2.4 Constant Comparative Method**

An underlying principle of GTM is the use of the constant comparative method (Polit & Beck, 2004), which involves the comparison of elements of one data source with the elements identified in other sources of data, such that commonalities and differences can emerge. The concept of ‘fit’ is also pertinent, whereby the characteristics of one piece of data are compared to the characteristics of other data in the set and, once again, similarities are identified. The intent of such constant comparison is to sort and reduce data.

During the analytical process, the researcher is able to identify data that matches existing known categories, belongs in a category related to those already known, deserves a new category or is not relevant. It is important that the researcher resists ‘forcing’ data to ‘fit’ as this will obstruct the development of theory (Glaser, 1992; Polit & Beck, 2004).

### **6.2.4.1 Open Coding**

As Miles and Huberman observe (1994, p.56), “coding is analysis. To review a set of field notes, transcribed or synthesized, and to dissect them meaningfully, while keeping the

relations between the parts intact, is the stuff of analysis.” Open coding occurs as part of the comparative analysis of one element of data to other data in the project. Open codes can be keywords that describe what is occurring or actual words spoken (or written) by participants in the research process. Glaser (1992) suggests that at this time the researcher’s role is to interrogate data elements in order to ascertain what category or property is displayed in that element. As Figure 32 shows, open coding occurs at three levels, which are:

<b><i>In vivo</i> coding</b>	Categories or properties are constructed directly from the data element being analysed.
<b>Broad categories</b>	Through a constant comparative process, the raw <i>in vivo</i> codes are refined and condensed into broader categories.
<b>Theoretical constructs</b>	As the broader categories are themselves compared and refined, the coding becomes more theoretical, producing what Glaser (cited in Polit & Beck, 2004, p.581) refers to as constructs that “add scope beyond local meanings.”

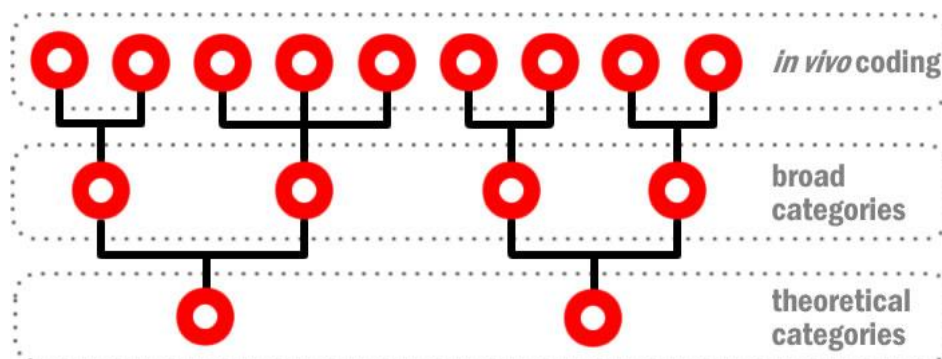


Figure 32: Levels of open coding.

#### 6.2.4.2 Axial Coding

Axial coding extends the process of open coding to include relating codes to each other. It occurs through a process of inductive and deductive thinking where causal relationships are privileged. The purpose of axial coding is to relate categories to subcategories. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) observe, it is a process of reassembling data after open coding has been completed and is an additional step missing from the earlier constructions of GTM (such as, Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

### **6.2.4.3 Selective Coding**

Selective coding reflects that there is a structural relationship between categories in a GTM project. As broad and theoretical categories emerge and are integrated to form the theoretical structure of the analysis, selective coding is used to traverse back through related codes to further explore categories and theories as they emerge.

### **6.2.4.4 Saturation**

An indication that coding is complete is that “no new properties, dimensions, conditions, actions/interactions, or consequences are seen in the data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.136) during coding. When this occurs the category is considered to be ‘saturated’. Whilst saturation is to some degree subjective, it can be considered as the point when the effort expended in collecting new data outweighs the value of that data. At this time, the process of data collection and coding appears counter-productive to the overall forward direction of the project, adding little if anything to the researcher’s understanding.

### **6.2.5 Basic Social Process**

Central to GTM is the underlying basic social process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which evolves from a category that generates significant interest for the researcher and which is both frequently occurring and saturated with data (Creswell, 1998a). This leads to an abstracted category encompassing all other categories and relating to them but also able to explain variations in the data. A basic social process must be sufficiently abstract to allow it to be applied in research in other substantive areas with the potential to develop more generic theory (Charmaz, 2000).

### **6.2.6 Memoing and Diagrams**

A memo is a short theoretical note or document that the researcher writes whilst immersed in the process of data analysis. The purpose of the memo in GTM is to act as a conceptual or analytical document, rather than to be descriptive. For this reason memos play an important role in the development, or emergence, of a theory. Diagrams also play a part in this process, providing a visual representation of concepts and relationships as they develop (Strauss &

Corbin, 1998). Both memos and diagrams provide a reflexive tool for the researcher to ensure they remain aware of their own position in the research (Richards, 2005). The use of memoing and diagrams begins during the initial analysis and continues throughout the research process. Memos are a fundamental source of data as well as a method of evolving, clarifying and articulating both codes and categories and, ultimately, theory as they evolve.

In this research memos were recorded in a written diary and electronically (through 'memo' documents in NVivo). Figure 33 gives an example of an NVivo memo, such memos were created as the data was being coded since this provided both an audit trail and immediacy:

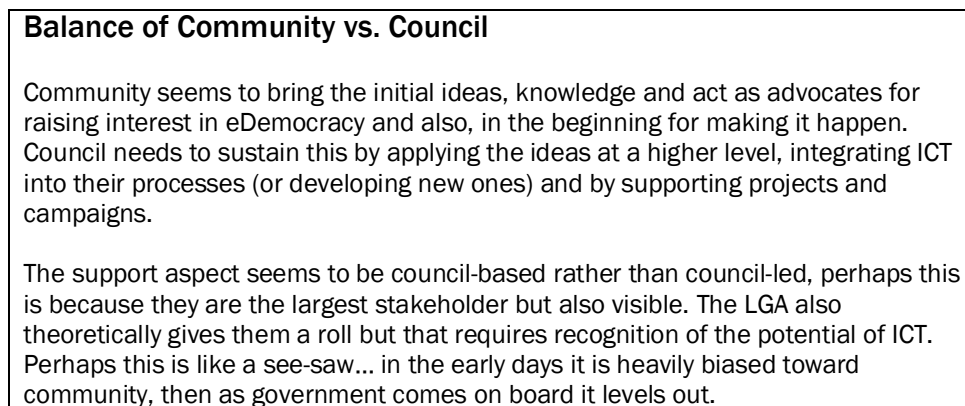
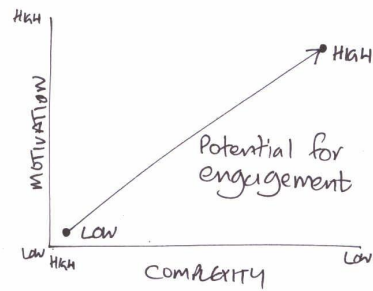


Figure 33: Example of a memo recorded in NVivo.

Hand written memos were also important since ideas often emerged following coding or data reviews and it was not always convenient to record thoughts using NVivo. In these instances, as Figure 34 shows, a diary note created by the researcher, includes both text and diagrams. Such memos evolved not only from data analysis but also as a result of the researchers own reflexive analysis of ideas that emerged from diary comments, literature and from conversations or events within local CI initiatives.



In order to increase engagement  
 need to: INCREASE MOTIVATION  
 AND  
 DECREASE COMPLEXITY

- Can do this through awareness building - of issues and of ICT.
- Increasing skills lowers complexity relatively.

Figure 34: Example of a handwritten memo.

Where memos provide a textual space for reflection and for exploring and recording emerging ideas and theoretical constructs, diagrams provide a visual way of exploring emerging concepts and relationships, and can be used to explore and develop ideas. An example of a diagram created in this research is shown in Figure 35. The example shown explores relationships emerging from the data between different actors involved in local CI initiatives. Particularly, what was prominent at this stage was the significance of the role of 'experts' in the community as 'thought-leaders' and 'change-agents' and how this related to other actors.

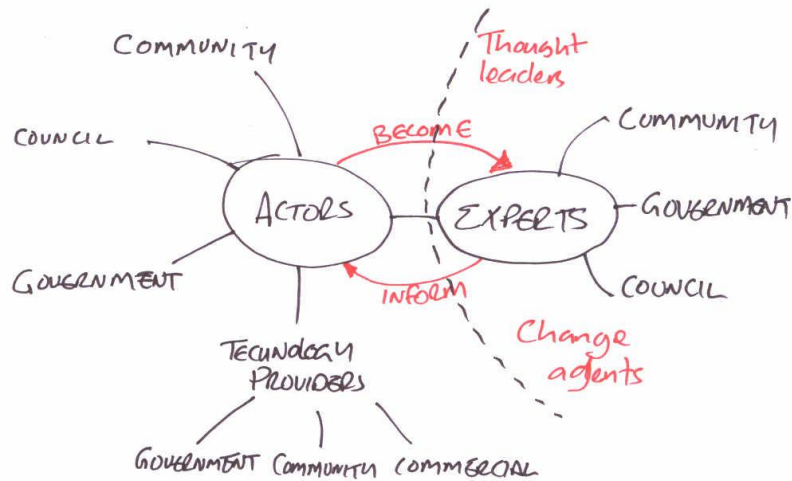


Figure 35: Example of rough sketched diagrams.

Concept mapping software (MindManager) and diagramming software (Microsoft Visio) played an important role in allowing graphical models to be formalised and developed, as shown in Figure 36. The example diagram, created during the early stages of analysing interview data, shows an exploratory evaluation of different emerging concepts of CI initiatives and their relationship to each other, namely:

Processes	<b>support and deliver</b>	ICT
Disruption	<b>transforms</b>	processes
Experts <sup>56</sup>	<b>advocate for and cause</b>	disruption

This led to a further analysis of concepts that grouped them into technical, social and transformative spheres.

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<sup>56</sup> The terminology subsequently changed from ‘expert’ – considered to be imbued with implications of power – to ‘grounded leadership’, which better reflected the participant’s descriptions of the role.

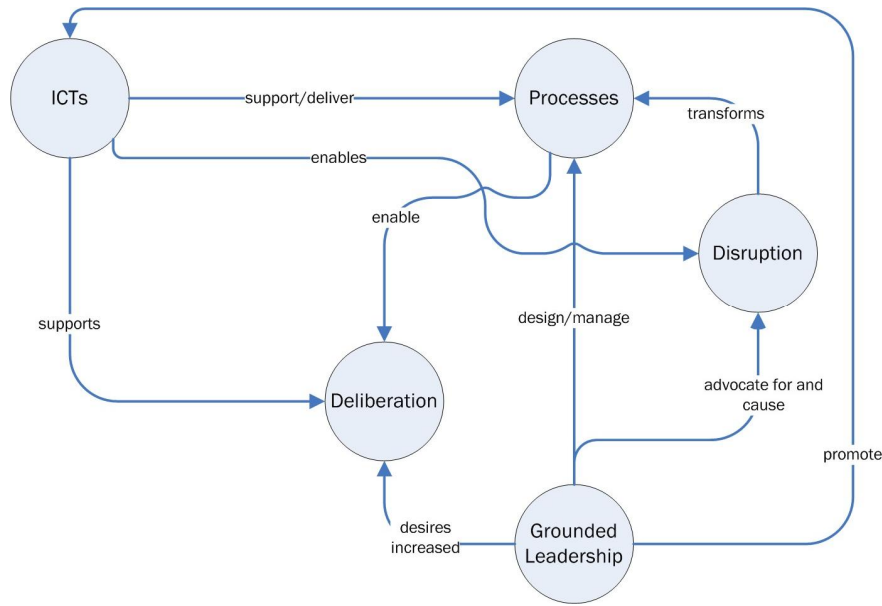


Figure 36: Example of computer-drawn diagram.

As categories emerged from the data analysis, diagrams were used to model hierarchies and relationships. In particular, as Figure 37 shows, the use of concept mapping software allowed the emerging model to be explored and manipulated outside the conceptual coding structure in NVivo and for data to be viewed from different perspectives. At this stage, the earlier drawings of attributes and constructs have started to transform into more clearly identifiable processes.

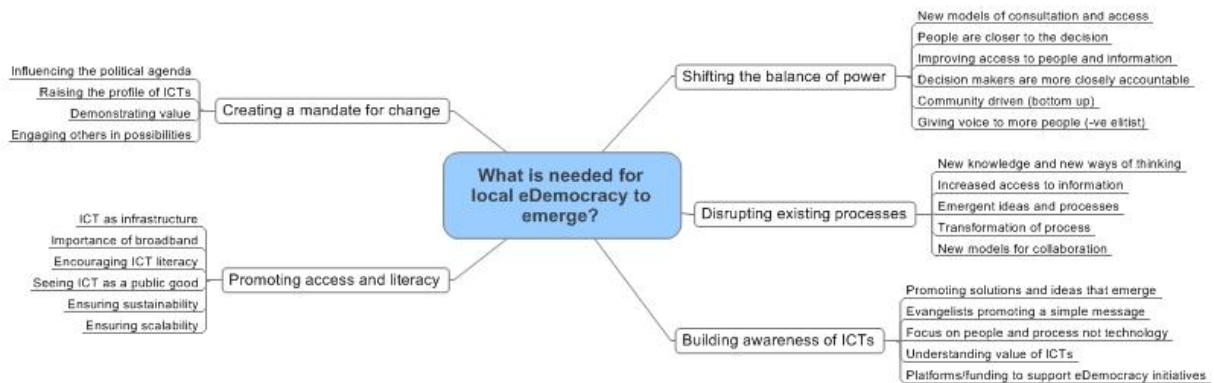


Figure 37: An example of a coding hierarchy emerging during the analysis process.

### 6.2.7 Evaluating a Grounded Theory

Research needs to faithfully represent the community being studied as well as be rigorous and valid, so that it can attract the attention of those who are able to do something about the



concerns raised (DeSouza, 2006). Qualitative research by its very nature always carries the possibilities of alternative explanations and a measure of uncertainty and research is more complex when participants are drawn from diverse groups. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend four criteria to ensure rigour in qualitative research, which are shown below and then discussed in the context of this research:

- Credibility,
- Transferability,
- Auditability and;
- Confirmability

Credibility was maintained through a process of member checking, providing participants with information on emerging ideas and soliciting feedback from the participants as to the reliability of the study as the research progressed. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend prolonged involvement with participants, in order to ensure that the researcher has learned about the culture they are studying. Prolonged involvement has occurred in this research through the researcher's own long term involvement in the projects being examined and through on-going dialogue and debate amongst participants in the broader CI initiatives. Transferability of knowledge generated was a primary concern and this occurred in three ways:

- Informally, through personal relationships with participants, including informal conversations and idea sharing.
- Formally through input to the initiatives being studied, through submissions to the council annual plan process, providing information to assist and support applications for project funding and through the researcher's role on local boards and the national Digital Strategy Advisory Group.
- Formally through academic and community publications<sup>57</sup>, conferences and publications in the national and local media.

Auditability and confirmability ensure that the research findings match the data. This was achieved by ensuring that rigorous data analysis processes were developed and adhered to

by the researcher. They are supported by software tools including NVivo and the availability of academic supervision. Decision trails were recorded and mapped so that the process of the research could be clearly followed.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest a variety of checks that can be performed on a grounded theory to establish its veracity and these are discussed in the context of the research findings in Chapter 9. They include the establishment of redundancy or reaching saturation where no new codes can be discovered as well reference to the following considerations:

- Degree of fit
- Functionality
- Relevance
- Modifiability
- Density
- Integration
- Audit Trail

This section has introduced GTM and positioned it as an appropriate methodological choice for research occurring in an emerging field and being able to privilege social actors, inductively develop theory and offer processes that are rigorous and auditable. The next section will describe the development of the interview instrument used to collect data for this stage of the research.

## 6.3 Interview Design

The remainder of the chapter will describe the design and application of an interview instrument to capture qualitative data which was then analysed using the GTM described above in the research context described in detail in Chapter 3. The intent of this phase of data collection was to determine answers to research questions 1 and 2:

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<sup>57</sup> See Appendix E.

- RQ1      What impact does ICT have on facilitating democratic processes?
- RQ2      What is an appropriate model for describing the processes required to establish and sustain the effective use of ICT in local democratic processes?

An objective of the survey instrument was to guide the development of interview questions, thereby avoiding Baym's (2003) criticism of an analysis of internet research based solely on survey data. In depth analysis of the survey data highlights a number of pertinent issues that can be explored further. These findings are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 and summarised in Table 32 below, along with the questions that they raise for further exploration during the interview phase:

Table 32: Summary of findings from survey instrument and topics for further research.

Ref.	Key survey finding	Topics for further exploration during interview phase
1	ICT is an important tool in the community and voluntary sector in New Zealand. It provides support and resources to a wide range of individuals and civil society groups and they are being used innovatively and successfully to communicate, research, resource, engage and promote.	How is this occurring in Waitakere City and what are the attitudes and perceptions of those involved in such projects?
2	High levels of social capital and strong social connectedness is demonstrated both on- and off-line.	Is this demonstrated in local projects through sharing, partnerships and other such examples?
3	ICT plays an important role in facilitating community engagement within the civil society sector and between civil society and government agencies.	What attitudes exist to civic engagement on each side, including trust and goodwill?
4	The level of computer and internet usage amongst the cohort is significantly higher than for the population as a whole, as is the level of Internet usage when connecting with government.	This will not be the case locally, so what can be learnt about the motivations and usage patterns of these 'early adopters' that can promote greater usage in Waitakere City.
5	Immediacy of access appears to be an important factor in effective use. The findings suggest that there is a potential access deficit for citizens and communities who immediate access to ICT usually at home or at work	What policy and practical solutions exist for solving inequities in access and skills.
6	Time and cost of access are barriers to increased ICT use and to the sustainability of CI initiatives. Time is a barrier to increasing skills and knowledge.	What policy and practical solutions exist to ensuring the sustainability and scalability of CI initiatives?
7	There is a strong affirmation of the potential value of eDemocracy tools and respondents viewed the delivery of government services as a core part of the democratic process, not simply as a transaction as is suggested in the majority of literature.	What are the perceptions of and attitudes to eDemocracy and what steps are being made to incorporate ICT into the democratic processes?
8	eDemocracy offers the potential to improve the quality	What strategies and barriers exist for

of access and the quality of information that is available. This in turn makes the democratic process more available, accountable and transparent for citizens. Participation is a key theme to emerge, including timely and appropriate access to information and the opportunity for active involvement in the democratic process.

**increasing participation in civil society and how is ICT supporting or overcoming these?**

### 6.3.1 Participant Recruitment

A purposive sampling technique (De Vaus, 2003) was used whereby potential participants for this phase of the research were identified from 19 respondents to the survey who indicated that they lived, worked or volunteered in Waitakere City, were involved to some degree in at least one CI initiatives and were willing to take part in an interview and from other actors known to the researcher to be active in CI initiatives. Eligibility for participation in Phase II was based on:

- Live, work or volunteer in Waitakere City;
- actively involved in CI initiatives (this could include as a participant in an initiative or as an advocate or support of initiatives); and
- some familiarity with the use of ICT

Table 33: Survey respondents in Waitakere City.

Live or work in Waitakere	33
Live in Waitakere	27
Work in Waitakere	27
Live and work in Waitakere	22
Willing to take part in Interview	29
<b>Described local involvement in one or more CI initiative</b>	<b>19</b>

A second source of key informants in the research location was identified as elected representatives who were key influencers for the adoption and use of ICT in the community and voluntary sector in the city and they were also invited to take part in the interview process. This is in effect the same participant profile as was used to recruit participants for Phase I with the refining criteria that the participant was directly active in community ICT-related projects in Waitakere City.

### 6.3.1.1 Participant Demographics

In total ten interviews were conducted. Table 34 shows the eight participants chosen for interviewing who are associated with Waitakere City. The participants were chosen to represent a mixture of community and council experience, varying levels of ICT usage (from basic to expert) and a diversity of roles, ranging from community activist to cabinet minister in central government. All participants agreed to be identified by name.

Table 34: Interview participants located in Waitakere City.

Name	Primary role in relation to research	Profile
Bevis England	Community	Executive Trustee of Work Raft Trust (a community ICT organisation), founding member of the Waitakere eDemocracy Group and community activist extensively involved in community ICT projects and advocacy in Waitakere City
Di Jennings	Community	Project Manager for inter-sectoral Waitakere Wellbeing and Collaboration Project and formally co-ordinator of the Ranui Action Project.
Mark Allen	Community and council officer	Community Outcomes Advisor, Waitakere City Council and member of Waitakere Online Editorial Board. Formerly Project Manager for Wellbeing and Collaboration Project.
Rochelle Edwards	Council officer	Project Manager for e-Infrastructure, Strategic Projects, Waitakere City Council
John Johnson	Council officer	Information Manager, Waitakere City Council
Councillor Penny Hulse	Elected representative	Waitakere City Councillor and member of the Waitemata District Health Board
Mayor Bob Harvey	Elected representative	Mayor of Waitakere City and former President of the New Zealand Labour Party
Hon David Cunliffe MP	Elected representative	MP for New Lynn, Minister for Information Technology and Minister of Communication.

Because Waitakere City is in the early stages of developing online tools, there is limited information available on what the impact of ICT will actually be for citizens as a whole. To further mitigate this, two participants were recruited from outside Waitakere City specifically because of their experience in the practical delivery of eDemocracy projects and to provide some additional reflective commentary once the initial eight interviews were completed (see Table 35).

Table 35: Interview participants located outside of Waitakere City.

Name	Primary role in relation to research	Profile
Dan Randow	Community	Director of Group Sense Ltd, Christchurch, NZ. Provides online deliberation solutions to eDemocracy.org in the UK and US.
Carol Haywood	Council officer	Project Manager for e-Democracy, Bristol City Council, UK

### 6.3.2 Interview Format

Interviews were semi-structured and conducted at a pre-arranged time and place to suit the participant. Prior to the interview, participants were sent a copy of the information sheet, a consent form and a pro-forma set of questions. The information provided to participants explained the purpose and structure of the interview and indicated that the questions were indicative of the nature of the interview.

The interviews were more akin to a free-flowing dialogue than a formal interview process. Such informality was intended to minimise any sense of power imbalance between interviewer and interviewee. This was made possible in part because the interviewer already had existing relationships with most of the participants. Drawing on Ellis and Berger’s (2003) approach of *reflexive dyadic interviewing*, the interviewer aimed to create a conversational environment where both parties were equal. The process included the interviewer disclosing their own knowledge and opinions on the topic, as sharing is seen as a way to build rapport and to promote an interactive experience.

Because the participants were encouraged to select an interview location that best suited them<sup>58</sup>. Home and work locations were conducive to interviewing and to recording the conversation, although minor interruptions were present, for example ringing telephones. The choice of a public café was potentially challenging as there was a high possibility of background noise, which could affect recording quality. The use of high quality short-range, directional microphones and digital recording equipment seemed to negate this problem and no issues were experienced with the quality of recording or in transcribing from them. The

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<sup>58</sup> Interviews took place in places of work (4), private homes (3) and public cafés (3).

café location also provided an unplanned benefit, in that the less formal environment seemed to lend itself to a more flowing and frank conversation, which might be explained by Oldenburg's (1991) concept of 'third space', where such independent locations are seen as removing individuals from the normal constraints of work and home.

Before the interview commenced, the nature and process of both the interview and the research were explained. The meaning and implications of signing the consent form was discussed prior to participants being asked to sign a copy of the Consent Form. Participants were also asked for their permission to use a voice recorder at the interview, which all agreed to. All interviews were transcribed from digital voice recordings. One interview was only partially transcribed due to the digital recorder batteries failing mid-way through. Notes were taken by the researcher for the remainder of this interview.

Interviews 9 and 10 were intended to identify practices, issues and examples from the participant's own experience but primarily to provide some reflection of the data obtained from the local interviews. These two interviews were not recorded but notes were taken by the researcher.

### 6.3.3 Interview Questions

Fourteen pro-forma questions were developed to allow the researcher to explore the topics identified in Table 32. The interviews were also designed to explore how participation in democratic process occurs in Waitakere City, the factors (including barriers and enablers) that influence the uptake of ICT amongst the participants and the participant's motivations for engagement with regard to their interactions with democratic processes. The interview instrument was designed to address the following research questions:

- SQ1.1      What is understood to be meant by the terms eDemocracy, eGovernment and eGovernance?
- SQ1.5      What factors influence and facilitate the adoption of ICT amongst those with an interest in local democracy?

- SQ1.6 What is the basic social process influencing the adoption of eDemocracy practices?
- SQ1.7 What is the basic social process of enhanced civic participation through eDemocracy?
- RQ2 What is an appropriate model for describing the processes required to establish and sustain the effective use of ICT in local democratic processes?

The following sections will describe the interview questions divided into four key areas: Personal knowledge and usage of ICT; eDemocracy; the Digital Strategy; and broad concluding remarks.

### **6.3.3.1 Knowledge and Usage**

The first section focuses on the respondent's own attitudes to and knowledge and usage of ICT:

1. What do you understand the term 'Information and Communication Technologies', or 'ICT' to mean?
2. What is your own level of knowledge and use of ICT?
3. Can you think of times when using ICT has been empowering, liberating, inconsequential or frustrating for you?

### **6.3.3.2 eDemocracy**

This second group of questions focus specifically on eDemocracy and is intended to identify both individual opinion and understanding of the subject as well as to identify broad knowledge of what eDemocracy encompasses, what is actually happening and whose role and responsibility eDemocracy might be:

4. What do you understand the term 'eDemocracy' to mean?
5. What is your level of awareness of eDemocracy?
6. What effect do you think eDemocracy will have on the following (and why):
  - a. Elected representatives (in parliament and local authorities)
  - b. Civil servants
  - c. Individuals
7. What do you think are the advantages of eDemocracy:



- a. For government activities?
- b. For community activities?
8. In terms of making eDemocracy happen, what do you consider to be the role of:
  - a. Central government
  - b. Local government
  - c. Community-based groups
  - d. Individuals
9. Have you ever talked about community ICT projects or eDemocracy with people that you know? If so, how would you summarise their knowledge and feelings about this?
10. Can you think of any downsides or negative aspects of eDemocracy, including barriers or difficulties with eDemocracy working in New Zealand?

### 6.3.3.3 Digital Strategy and other initiatives

The next two questions expand the context to incorporate the broader strategic level, through questions regarding the participant's knowledge of and involvement in the Digital Strategy<sup>59</sup> (New Zealand Government, 2005) and other CI initiatives:

11. The government has just released its Digital Strategy.
  - a. Are you aware of this document?
  - b. Have you read it?
  - c. Did you read the draft strategy (published in 2004)?
  - d. Did you make a submission?
  - e. Do you think that the Digital Strategy can help increase awareness of and use of eDemocracy in New Zealand?
  - f. What do you think are the roles of government, local authorities, communities, individuals and business in making the Digital Strategy happen?
12. Are there any initiatives that you're aware of either at a community, local government or central government level that will affect the potential for eDemocracy. If so, what are they and what is their impact or effect?

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<sup>59</sup> The Digital Strategy is the primary policy driver for ICTs.

### 6.3.3.4 Concluding questions

The penultimate question is intended to identify further interview participants by asking for referrals. It was useful not for identifying potential participants who are not already known to the researcher but also for identifying the interviewees own networks and for comparing the names that are mentioned at different interviews. Doing so will suggest a pattern of local recognition of individuals who might be involved or interested in eDemocracy and the repetition of names across a number of interviews is one indicator that saturation might have been reached (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

13. Can you suggest who else I might talk to about eDemocracy (in particular, anyone who lives or works in Waitakere City)?

Finally, there is an opportunity for respondents to add any further comments or remarks that they wish to make:

14. Are there any other matters that you would like to raise at the interview?

## 6.4 Testing and Administration of the Interviews

The interview instrument was pilot tested using the first two interviews. The participants for these first two interviews were specifically selected to be representative of the two ends of the continuum; one a strong advocate working in the community and the second a city council officer. The interviews were recorded and both were transcribed in full to allow for detailed coding to occur. No changes were made to the interview structure as a result of these two interviews.

Interviews were semi-structured and all participants were supplied with a sample set of questions and topics prior to the interview to ensure that they were familiar with the topic and the questions. The interviews were designed to last approximately one hour. In reality they ranged from one hour to one hour forty-five minutes and permission was sought to record the interviews.

## 6.5 Confidentiality and Anonymity

The Consent Form explicitly asked participants to confirm whether they wished their interview details to be confidential and anonymous, so they could not be publicly identified, or whether they agreed that their names and roles could be used and attributed to comments made. This step was important because a number of participants in the research were public figures and the value of their opinions was to some degree predicated by the position they held. Attempting to obscure the identity of a public figure is “usually not a feasible option, not only would it destroy the salience of the interview, but also it is impossible. Putting together even a few minor details could reveal the identity of the person” (Corti, Day, & Backhouse, 2000, p.12).

Protecting the identities of individual participants, particularly those in public office, becomes even less tenable in this research given that the research location is clearly identified. Confidentiality is an issue of ethical significance for researchers in New Zealand, given its size and relatively small population. Traditional methods of masking true identity include the use of pseudonyms for research participants and renaming geographic locations. These are not necessarily useful or even appropriate as readers, and particularly those with some local knowledge, can often deduce true identities and locations through other cues inherent in the text (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). Precedence exists for allowing research participants to make an informed decision regarding their own confidentiality, particularly Ramsden’s (2002) ground-breaking work on cultural safety in nursing education.

## 6.6 Data Analysis Procedures

The qualitative data resulting from the interviews was analysed using a combination of QSR Nvivo, database-driven queries, mind-mapping software and manual, paper and audio-based procedures. The first two interviews were transcribed in their entirety by the researcher, an intentional choice made for two reasons: First, having a complete transcription was considered to be important for attempting to rigorously code the initial interviews and ensure that a full range of themes could be identified. Second, the act of transcribing is itself

a form of analysis and permits the researcher to become more embedded in the data being studied (Richards, 2005). A standard document template was developed for transcription files to be imported into NVivo. The first two interviews were free-coded, to identify the emergent themes in each. The transcription of subsequent interviews was done by an external transcription service and verified against the audio track.

The analysis process involved each transcript being coded within NVivo and emergent codes compared with other transcripts and the node tree, with constant referral to previous transcripts and, where necessary, the digital audio of the interview. As new codes emerged, previous transcripts were again cross-checked for links and connections and codes merged where appropriate, establishing a base-set of 'free nodes'. In line with GTM, coding was then refined as each new transcript was reviewed leading to the production of an initial set of themes for each interview and these were then translated into free codes in NVivo. As more interviews took place, codes were merged and refined as well as new codes created. Figure 38 shows an example of the development of nodes within NVivo as the coding and analysis progressed.

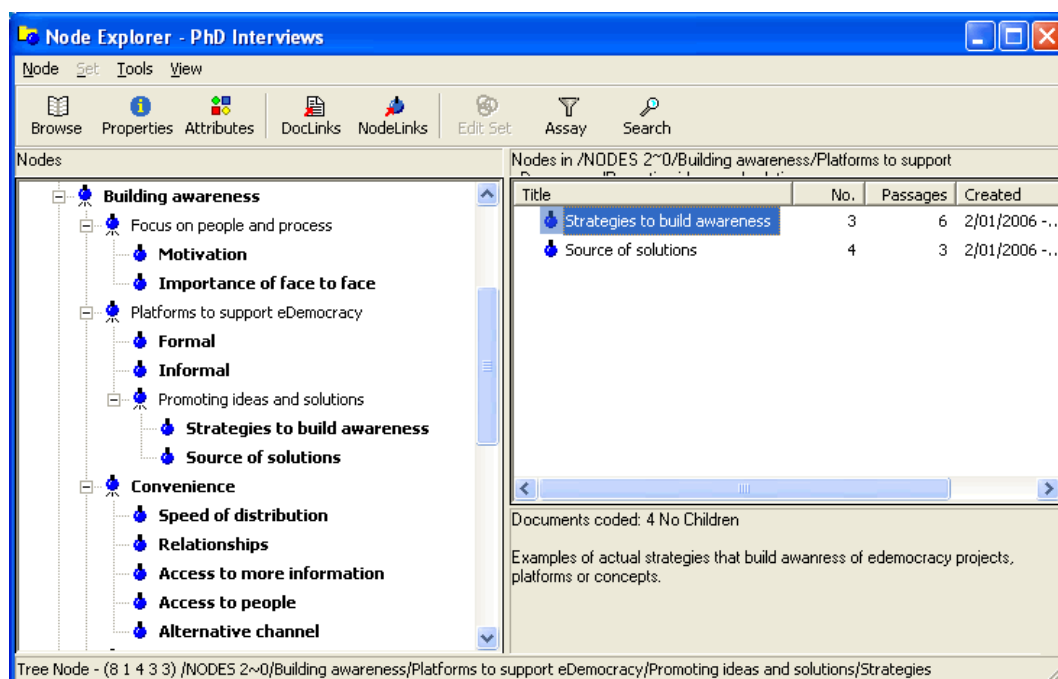


Figure 38: NVivo node tree.

Once each transcript had been fully coded and a process of coding review had occurred, the coding structure was transferred from NVivo to MindManager software and the coding model re-created as a concept diagram. Emergent data and attributes were stored as notes within node elements of this hierarchical diagram. Conceptual coding took place through memos and diagramming, electronically through searching, restructuring, re-positioning and merging of categories, on paper and through referral back to the full text transcripts and original audio. This process was both recursive and cyclical. As Figure 39 shows, the raw transcripts were printed and reviewed in hard-copy format, with manual annotations, initial ideas and themes written onto the page.

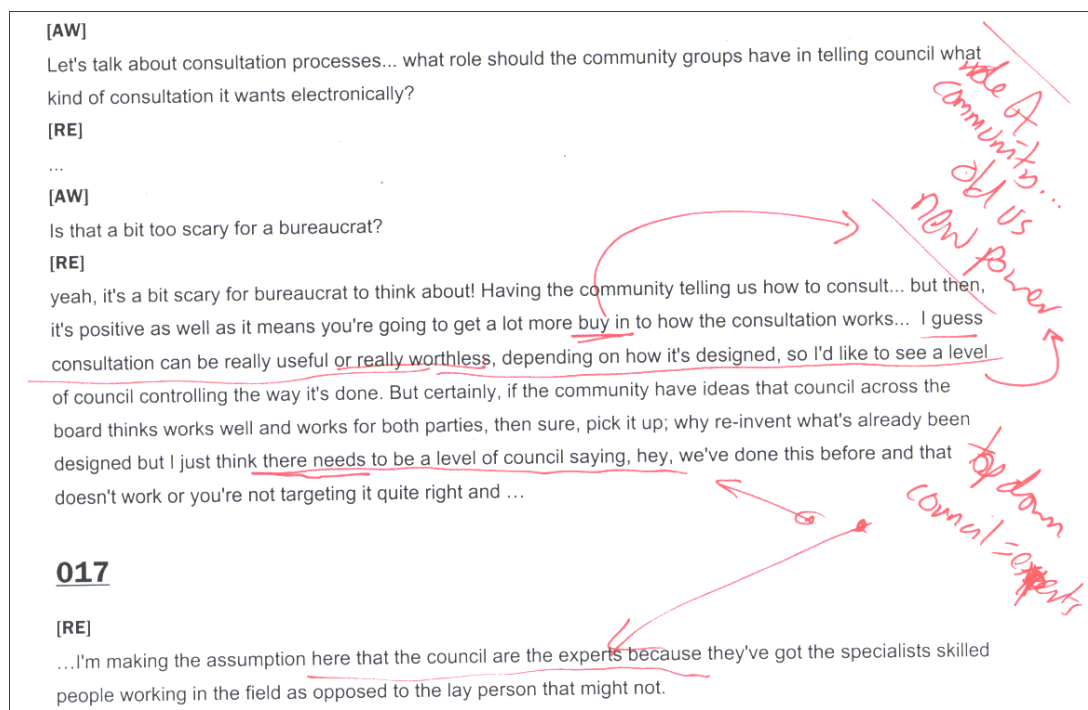


Figure 39: Manually annotated transcript.

After this initial manual process, transcripts were returned to and further annotated, specific sub-sections reprinted or the document annotated electronically, an example of which is shown in Figure 40.

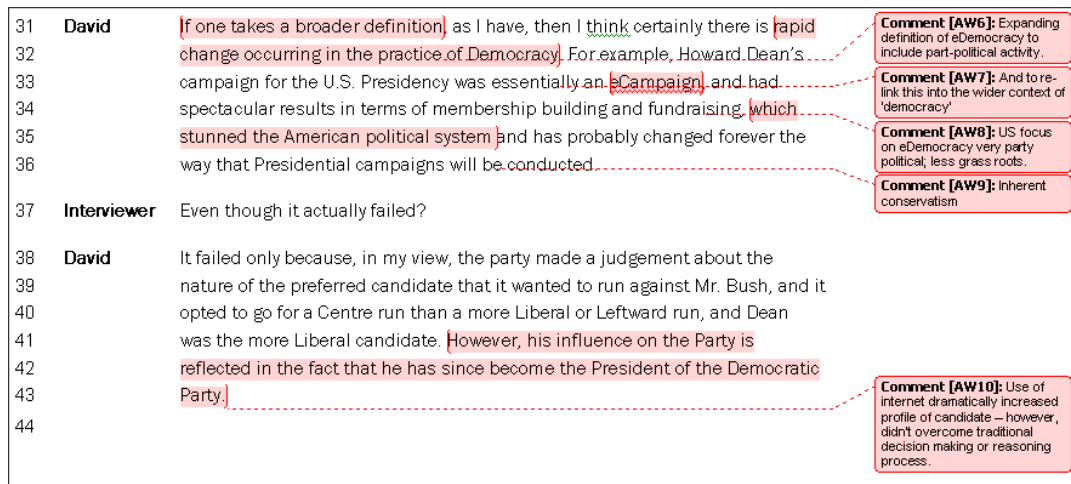


Figure 40: Electronically Annotated transcript.

In addition to a reflexive process and the on-going creation of memos and diagrams described in Chapter 3, a coding and activity log was maintained in order to record procedural changes to the nodes and coding structure. An example of this is shown in Figure 41.

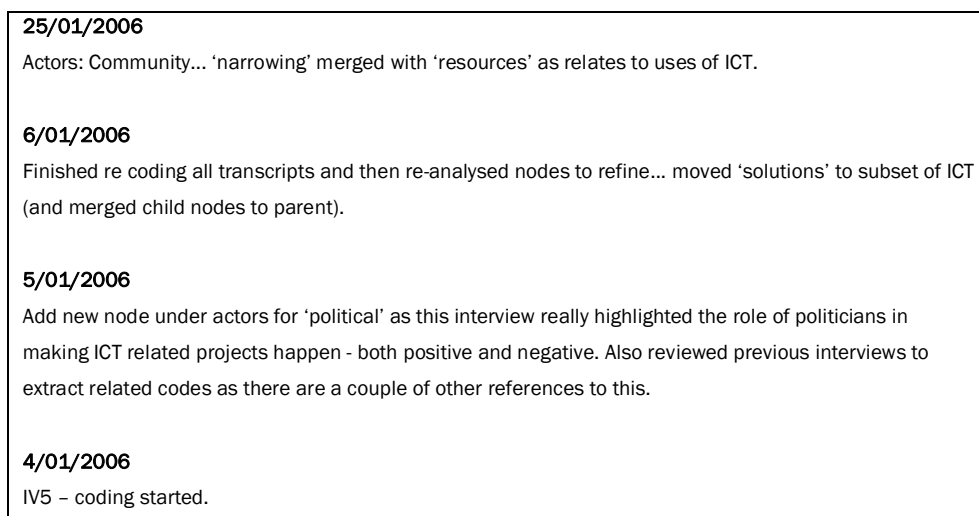


Figure 41: Coding and activity log.

## 6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has described the methodological approach to the second phase of data collection and presented a detailed discussion of the design and testing of the interview instrument. It has described the participants for the study, discussed issues of confidentiality

and anonymity and provided examples of the research process in order to demonstrate rigour and the maintenance of an audit trail. The resultant interview data was analysed using GTM as described in this chapter and the results of this analysis and a discussion of the findings are presented in the next chapter, followed in Chapter 8 by a discussion of the basic social process and the integration of the interview findings with those from the survey instrument in the first phase.





# Chapter 7 – Interview Analysis and Discussion

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the data obtained from the second phase of data collection in this mixed methods study. The design of the interview instrument and administration of the interview process is described in Chapter 6. In line with the precepts of GTM discussed in Chapter 6, this chapter is structured according to the categories that emerged during the conceptualisation phase of the data analysis. This followed on from a process of discovery where free nodes were merged, consolidated and refined as subsequent transcripts were analysed. For the interviews, eight participants were drawn from the Waitakere City community, local government and elected representatives (city and national) and two further participants recruited from elsewhere based on their existing knowledge and experience of eDemocracy projects (see Table 36). All participants agreed to be identified in the research. Interviewing continued until it became clear that “no new properties, dimensions, conditions, actions/interactions, or consequences [were to be] seen in the data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.136). At this point, known in GTM as ‘saturation’, the value of acquiring more data is outweighed by the effort and the analysis moves on to the next phase, that of conceptualisation.

Table 36: Interview participants.

Primary role	Name	Profile
Community	Bevis England	Executive Trustee of Work Raft Trust (a community ICT organisation), founding member of the Waitakere eDemocracy Group and community activist extensively involved in community ICT projects and advocacy in Waitakere City
	Di Jennings	Project Manager for inter-sectoral Waitakere Wellbeing and Collaboration Project and formally co-ordinator of the Ranui Action Project.
	Dan Randow	Director of Group Sense Ltd, Christchurch, NZ.

		Provides online deliberation solutions to eDemocracy.org in the UK and US.
Community and Council Officer	Mark Allen	Community Outcomes Advisor, Waitakere City Council and member of Waitakere Online Editorial Board. Formerly Project Manager for Wellbeing and Collaboration Project. Volunteer Fireman living in Waitakere City.
Council officer	Rochelle Edwards	Project Manager for e-Infrastructure, Strategic Projects, Waitakere City Council, co-author of Digital City Strategy and member of Waitakere Online Editorial Board.
	Carol Haywood	Project Manager for e-Democracy, Bristol City Council, UK
	John Johnson	Information Manager, Waitakere City Council, member of Waitakere Online Editorial Board.
Elected representative	Hon David Cunliffe MP	MP for New Lynn, Minister for Information Technology and Minister of Communication.
	Mayor Bob Harvey	Mayor of Waitakere City and former President of the New Zealand Labour Party
	Councillor Penny Hulse	Waitakere City Councillor and member of the Waitemata District Health Board

This remainder of this chapter will describe the categories that emerged from the data analysis of the interview transcripts. In line with the chosen methodology, GTM, this chapter is structured such that each category is described sequentially. It is also, however, presented so as to maintain the narrative of the participants such that the voices of community actors are preserved and faithfully reported. As Figure 42 shows, six categories describing the influence and effect of ICT on democratic process in Waitakere City emerge from this analysis and a seventh category, ‘grounded leadership’, is identified as the basic social process.

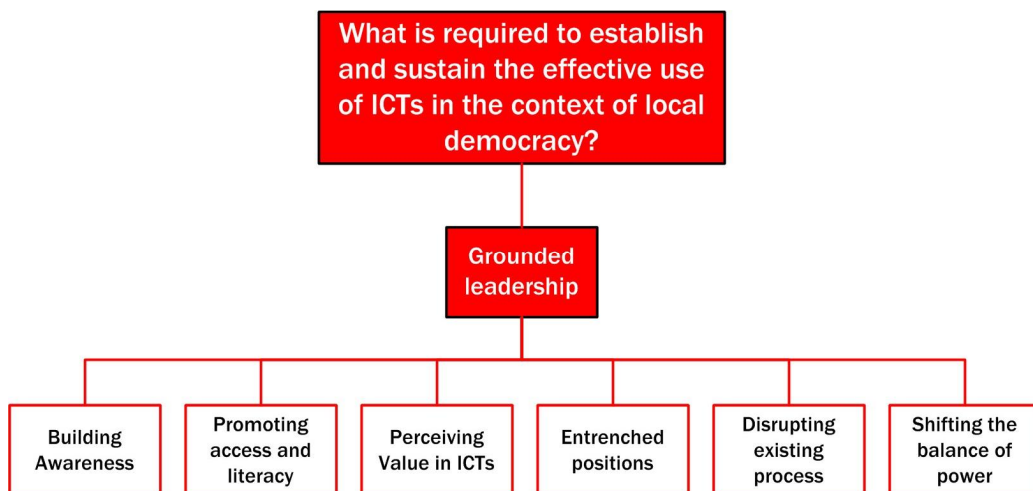


Figure 42: Categories.

The results of the analysis are presented for the six categories above as an annotated summary of the research findings, where participant's comments are blended with critical observations obtained from the analytical process and with pertinent literature. The basic social process is then described in Chapter 8, along with an emergent framework for citizen-based eDemocracy that is derived from the integration of the findings described in this chapter along with findings of the survey instrument and literature review.

## 7.2 Building Awareness

The first category refers to building awareness of ICT amongst citizens and within local government, including the importance of emphasising people over technology (Keeble & Loader, 2001) and promoting examples of successful projects:

We've talked about the abstract concept of participation before but actually showing the Editorial Board examples of participatory websites – eg AskBrisol, the Aotearoa Ethnic Network and The Couch – really seemed to pique their curiosity. Suddenly people could see what it meant and the idea became more real [researcher's diary].

Overall, there was a lack of recognition within council for how ICT can support different interactions with communities, where

the barrier is the ability or awareness; it's seeing the need [Mark Allen].

Figure 43 shows, awareness of community level platforms that support eDemocracy must be generated at the community level platforms. Communicating this through simple non-technical messages is important, as is an understanding of the need to have appropriate networks and infrastructure:

How do you get people involved... it's a matter of creating that perceived value, that demand [Bevis England].

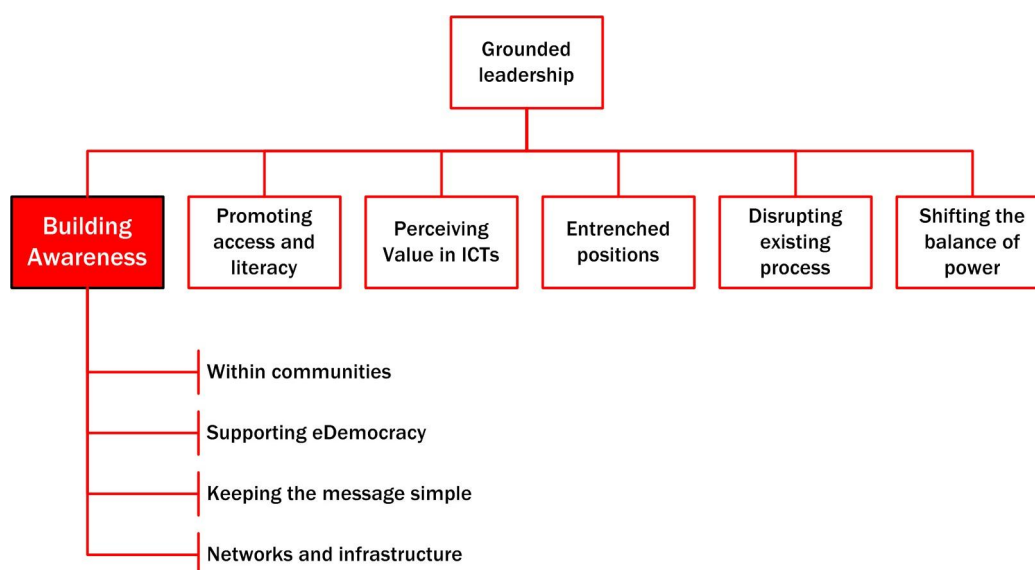


Figure 43: Building awareness category.

## 7.2.1 Building awareness within communities

Convenience is a personal process; as individuals adopt ICT they recognise value and demonstrate this to others (Dederich, Hausman, & Maxwell, 2006). At the wider community level, processes emerge that build awareness of how ICT can support participation in or interaction with democratic activities, for example:

- Lobbying
- Resources
- Engagement and motivation
- Trust

ICT connects individuals, creating or sustaining a common good, rather than isolating them. On the negative side, lack of awareness re-enforces poor uptake, creates the potential for exclusion and for communities to lag behind in their use of ICT. Awareness around access to resources, including infrastructure and content, is therefore important and leads to an increase in demand for ICT. As noted in Chapter 2, funding is limited and this raises

questions of sustainability. ICT also appears to increase the workload of community groups, both directly and as a result of increased information flows,

it's a question of how manageable that is in terms of resourcing someone to manage all that stuff that's coming in [Di Jennings].

An important distinction can be drawn between community groups and individual citizens that must be considered in the context of resourcing and awareness of ICT, recognising the different roles played by ICT and promoting them appropriately. Suggestions included appointing 'community technology champions' grounded in the community they serve and knowledgeable of ICT.

You actually have to pay people that work with the community, that relate to the community and get them to drive and run it [John Johnson].

Engagement with ICT and sustaining the motivation to use them was a key issue,

you actually have to create the demand at base [Bevis England].

There was evidence of this happening in some areas and the survey data, discussed in Chapter 5, shows a high uptake of online services amongst existing users of ICT in the sector. The aim, therefore, is to build awareness and create motivation to use ICT in the wider civic arena.

eCommerce has taken off and people are interested. They want to buy something or look at it, if you can get that engagement going in eDemocracy, you're going to have a major uptake [John Johnson].

Motivation and engagement can emerge from the community itself, demonstrated by the establishment of community computing facilities,

the community drove that and it became quite a successful little model [Bevis England].

Embedding projects within the community allows the community to step forward,

I think there are people in the community; it just hasn't been tapped into as well [John Johnson].

Individuals can be sceptical about ICT when they are unfamiliar with them and sometimes new technologies are seen as invasive. However, scepticism can be overcome by building up trust not in the technology per se but in the use (or perceived personal value) of the technology. The actors encountered and interacted with in this process are the key.

I do all my banking this way or that and it works. I've done it for so long and you tell your friend that and the next one. It's no good the banks coming and telling you that [John Johnson].

This issue becomes one of increasing one's own comfort as human beings with new ways of being and working.

I think that [eDemocracy is] something that we really need to grow into [Di Jennings].

A challenge for developing eDemocracy is that community groups often appear to lag behind in their use of ICT, even where awareness of the potential value exists,

[they] appreciate what ICT can do for them but I see the community sector being a bit like... yes, it's great stuff and I'd like to get into more of it but I don't have the time [Di Jennings].

## 7.2.2 Supporting eDemocracy

Within Waitakere City Council, awareness of eDemocracy was limited to formal submissions and email. Promoting ideas and solutions involving ICT can be considered in two ways.

First, the strategies used to build awareness and, second, the source of the solutions.

Strategies that build awareness about the value of ICT must focus on the issue and potential value rather than the technology and avoid creating false expectations of ICT as a panacea for communities.

We need people to not be under false pretences [and] think that there's going to be increased rates of active participation, but there might be higher levels of awareness and more opportunity and choice [Mark Allen].

Recognising that issues are complex and time is often limited is important, as is recognising that different people will have (and will accept as sufficient) different levels of understanding and engagement, just as they do through other media.

Often my experience is that people are interested but they're not prepared to spend the time to understand the issue [Di Jennings].

## 7.2.3 Keeping the message simple

Focusing on technological issues rather than the benefits to people appeared to be a major barrier to building awareness. Generating awareness, and subsequently trust, needs a simple message that keeps ICT and eDemocracy in perspective.

ICT is complicated and can be confusing, so it needs to be explained simply [Penny Hulse]

Because of its newness, there was not wide understanding across the community of how ICT can affect democratic interactions,

I think that there's a job to be done for those who are advocates of eDemocracy to improve the public understanding of the broad definition as well as the narrow one [David Cunliffe].

One perception was that, ironically, this has not been helped by the government's release of the Digital Strategy and subsequent references to funding from the strategy.

The public presence post-release has been very technology focused and more about contracts than anything else [Rochelle Edwards].

It was seen as difficult for citizens unfamiliar with ICT to engage with technology when the focus is on what is new and unfamiliar.

Forget that you can link up broadband and you can have so many megabytes. That means nothing. It's what you can do with it and what difference it makes to you [John Johnson].

This problematic focus on technology was reflected in some community perceptions of ICT,

there's a handful of advocates who are really working hard to advocate from a community perspective... what I really like about [them] is that there's absolute clarity... that this is not about ICT, this is about better communication [Di Jennings].

As Loader and Keeble (2004) argue, CI is about privileging information and communication ahead of technology. Emphasising the grassroots and keeping participants central to the message in order to

take some of the fear out of it. It's like, "Oh, well, we know about communication. We understand communication. That's our core business. That's what we do" [Di Jennings].



## 7.2.4 Networks and infrastructure

Supporting the use of ICT is awareness of when and how individuals can access them and the necessary infrastructure. Infrastructure must be recognised as a strategic platform for Council and Government if opportunities to operationalise eDemocracy projects are to be taken,

it's a backbone of national significance [Mark Allen].

Whilst some council services are available online, access to the internet is far from ubiquitous. The city, therefore, was reliant on private computer usage supplemented by Library-based Learning Centres. More extensive infrastructure options could include rolling out computers in public spaces, for example:

I went to Singapore, when I was President of the Labour Party. I went to look at the kiosks that were down [in the shopping malls], where I just touched the screen [Bob Harvey].

This aids awareness-building by making ICT visible and accessible, helping to make people more familiar with using the internet to transact services. Local (and central government) must recognise its role in enabling the use of ICT within the democratic process. Whilst communities can promote and innovate, it requires awareness within the systems of power to spread ideas and build wide-spread acceptance. Government agencies, for example, could encourage individuals and groups to share successful examples with others in order to build awareness and trust.

## 7.3 Promoting access and literacy

The second emergent category, shown in Figure 44, describes processes that promote a communities' ability to access ICT, whether this is at home or through public-access, and projects to increase information and ICT literacy within the community. Norris (2001) argues that deprivation of access to ICT directly leads to a failure to become technological literate

and therefore an inability to participate in effectively in the ‘information Society’. Chapter 2 shows that is those who are already marginalized (for reasons that can include socio-economics, education or geography) are less likely to have access to ICT (Norris, 2001; Servon, 2002).

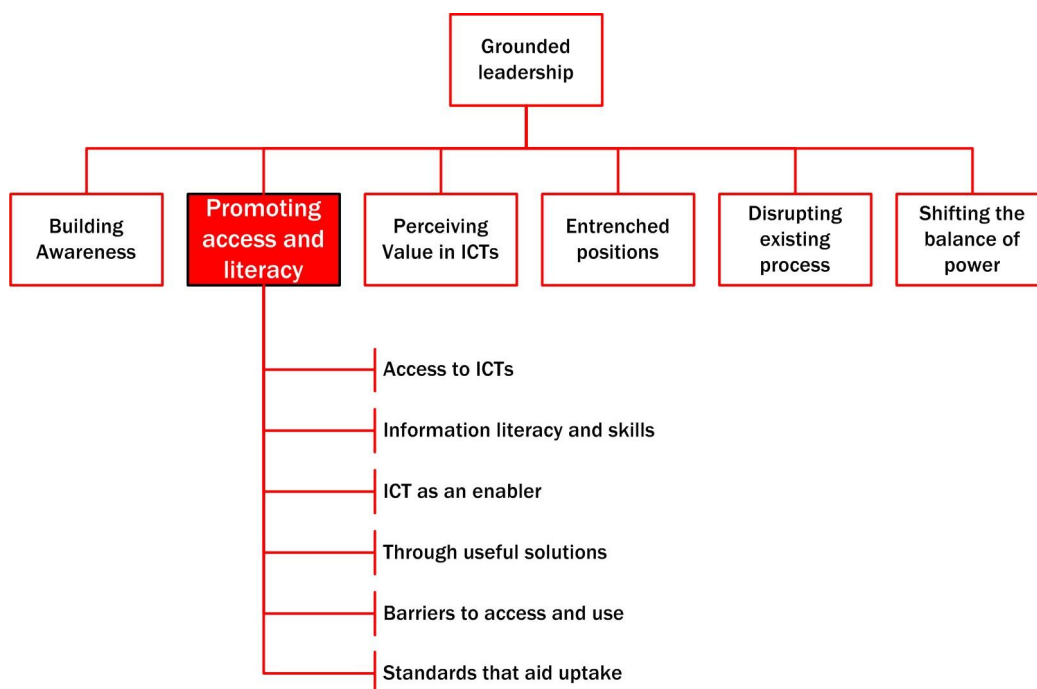


Figure 44: Promoting access and literacy.

### 7.3.1 Access to ICT

Access to ICT must include encouraging home ownership of personal computers as well as encompassing public access to ICT and more ubiquitous mobile technologies. Relying solely on public access is problematic as, for youth, computer access in the home “is not compensated for in other sites, but increasingly impacts on the extent to which [they] will participate in a wider computer culture” (Facer & Furlong, 2001, p.15). Issues facing Waitakere City include both infrastructure and equity of access and Rochelle Edwards believed that Council must take a more pro-active stance to overcome these,

I don't think we are getting enough people online in the urban areas [Rochelle Edwards].

Broadband is important to increased access because it makes more of the internet more available,

lack of broadband is a frustration at home because it means large documents are a real problem when accessing council intranet [Penny Hulse].

Waitakere City Council provides free computer and internet access at libraries, with a small number of newer libraries also having ICT suites, known as Learning Centres.

We need to promote the Learning Centres for people that don't have any access at all. So that they know they can get to something in their community and libraries need to be perceived as places where technology can be accessed, not just books [Rochelle Edwards].

However, Edwards suggested that to be fully successful, a change in thinking around how council services are provided was needed, citing an example of one Learning Centre regular who would not be seen as the typical audience within council.

There's one guy who comes into Glen Eden because he's not interested in working from home and he wants to interact with people but in a safe place, not an Internet Cafe [Rochelle Edwards].

Public access is important. As both Mark Allen and Di Jennings observe, even the community and voluntary sector was increasingly reliant on ICT, particularly email,

so you're excluding poor people, maybe some older people who just aren't IT savvy [Di Jennings].

Whilst younger people tend to be more ICT-aware and have the skills, they can also lack access,

I've been working in Ranui... a lot of the younger people are very savvy and smart, but they still might not have a computer at home [Di Jennings].

Many participants felt that access to ICT will become as important as electricity and water to citizens. Housing New Zealand includes broadband as a key infrastructure item in planning for a new state housing development in Waitakere City and Mayor Harvey sees a time when access to the internet will be ubiquitous.

Yeah, so I can just go in, get my coffee, check my emails... I'd love to go to the Hardware Café. I'd love to just walk down there and just sit there... "A flat white please", read my emails, oh shit... yeah... [Bob Harvey].

### **7.3.2 ICT and information literacy**

ICT was generally constructed by participants as positive but a negative aspect to emerge was one of information overload. The sheer volume of information, especially when it is combined with infrequent or unreliable access or a slow internet connection, can be frustrating and off-putting, requiring

a far higher level of sifting and a far higher level of base intelligence to control the incoming information [Bevis England].

For others, email in particular caused them problems.

I think a lot of people are suffering from that email overwhelm at the moment [Penny Hulse].

Managing the increased volume of information required the adoption of new working patterns,

so it's not really too many emails, it's lack of that 2 hours a day to sit, sort, sift, send off and chop [Penny Hulse].

However, adapting new ways of working to compensate for new ways of communicating appeared to be the problematic when resources were already stretched.

We're really overwhelmed with information on email and I'm aware that I don't... you know, in terms of just my personal ability to manage that... I know that there are ways to manage it and that you can divert some of the extraneous stuff but I haven't figured that out yet... how you do that [Di Jennings].

Bob Harvey suggests that the immediacy of emails arriving on the screen in front of you creates a type of panic for people and that this is different to other forms of media,

you know, like "Oh my God, there's 30. Oh shit", you know, so you approach it with "Oh shit", where... you don't do when you pick up a book. You don't... if this says 500 pages you don't go "Oh fuck, 500 pages" [Bob Harvey].

Harvey suggested that it takes time to come to terms with this immediacy and that it is necessary to re-frame how emails are managed, not thinking that each requires an instantaneous response. Even for those who, like Mark Allen, are relatively confident users of ICT, this overload was challenging and he acknowledges that it has required some changes to the way he manages information, for example ensuring emails are clear and unambiguous.

My learning was making sure that on the subject line you would be clear about what was better information and what our expectation was of the person receiving it [Mark Allen].

Whilst strategies can aid with the management of information flows, for Bevis England it was also an issue that the increased volumes of information require

a far higher level of sifting and a far higher level of base intelligence to control the incoming information [Bevis England].

### 7.3.3 ICT as an enabler

The promotion of ICT must focus on value, not technology. Therefore promoting access and literacy must stress the outcome of acquiring skills. ICT is becoming a key enabler for civil society engagement with government and Mark Allen suggested that they can build consensus by sharing of information more quickly than traditional methods of engagement. However, even technology-focussed projects can get significant momentum from face-to-face encounters,

the whole [Waitakere Eco Tech Action] project, that only happened once we got together in a room and talked... that was essentially the birth of [the Waitakere eDemocracy Group]. That was when I came across Mary for the first time... and the Karekare people [Bevis England].

The internet supports new networks and connections, where face-to-face meetings are unlikely to happen or, if they do, will happen infrequently, building new social networks and connecting community activists with like-minded people in other locations,

you're never going to meet those people face-to-face. It just opens up opportunities of connecting with people that you just would never have [Di Jennings].

The technology must support the overall objectives of what people are trying to achieve and provide some benefit, whether this is speed of access, range of information or ease of communication. The tools to do this need to be usable by the majority of the population, therefore, overly complex or technical solutions are a barrier,

If you want to reach a fair percentage of the whole population, it's got to be at a reasonable level that you don't have a major training education process either [John Johnson].

One way of demonstrating the value to others is to highlight ways in which ICT has been used successfully by people in similar situations,

I also think though that just my observation of other people working in the area [Mark Allen].

### 7.3.4 Useful solutions

If adoption is related to value, then it is through applications that value is achieved. Bevis England posits that the ones who will develop eDemocracy processes are those

who stand to gain the most from it. Because they are the ones with the highest perceived value [Bevis England].

England suggested that, initially at least, this will be government agencies rather than communities and this was supported to some degree by what has happened in Bristol, where Carol Hayward noted that it is the city council that has driven the uptake of participatory and consultative online tools, rather than citizens. In the longer term, there is also a role for individuals within a local community and such individuals

who are keen enough to be involved in all of this and can see the value will also have a very powerful role to play. It's not going to be one or the other [Bevis England].

Rochelle Edwards suggested that new projects could emerge at a community level so long as individuals in the community can communicate effectively with a non-technical audience, including council, to demonstrate the benefits of new tools and build demand for them. It can also be a way of engaging council in becoming the delivery channel for eDemocracy,

projects start off as ideas, especially at the strategic level and if there's enough of a voice it's deemed to be what the community wants and council is there to deliver the outputs that the community asks for. So, come forward and push as a lobby group [Rochelle Edwards].

The challenge, however, is that individuals and organisations lack the awareness, cannot see the potential or feel unable to take on new ways of working using ICT precisely because they are new and unfamiliar.

John Johnson argued that key stakeholders need to be identified and supported within the community. These are people who are trusted and known and who can act to coordinate and promote the use of ICT. In this model, the role of local government could be to coordinate such groups of people to fund projects (or at least to provide an umbrella structure to attract external funding). Council can become the conduit to provide a central place that people can come to – both physically in the case of learning centres and virtually for resources. Johnson believed that council can

actually physically facilitate it and drive it and get up the interest and get the people to actually become some of those champions in a way and those people don't have to actually be long serving council people; they can be people in the community and get paid for that, for their time and it becomes a bit of a career for them in a way [John Johnson].

### **7.3.5 Barriers to access and use**

The lack of access to ICT is a barrier to effective online participation (Chadwick, 2006). Whilst the mobile phone is becoming ubiquitous, computer penetration and internet access is not universal. The results of the survey, discussed in Chapter 5, suggest that immediacy of access to ICT is a factor in them being perceived as useful.

Access is a huge issue and we haven't really overcome it at the moment [Rochelle Edwards]

The cost of ICT projects is a barrier for many and

the potential's great but the financial resource is not there [John Johnson].



As a result the cost of computers or internet access also needs to be considered for individuals,

I don't see it as being a choice in a lot of our community. It is exclusion due to poverty [Di Jennings].

The lack of access to infrastructure and resources can be a problem because

people in the community sector do not have access to the structures, the resources, the training, the peers, coaching that government and business has [Mark Allen].

The attitude of Council towards ICT in general and eDemocracy in particular was a barrier to its uptake and this seems to largely reflect a lack of awareness on the part of Council officers. When Council staff were given a demonstration of an online values-based decision-making tool they failed to take up the opportunity to pilot it.

It's a very useful tool and I can see the value in it, I just don't think people are ready... Yes, it's too new [Rochelle Edwards].

Council has not assessed the potential demand for eDemocracy and it appears that the attitude within Council is that it would prefer to let the demand build from outside before it adopts new practices. Catalysts are required to highlight the benefits of eDemocracy and online participation. Without such examples, there is a risk that existing, potentially outdated processes will be transitioned into an online model, rather than new models of consultation and participation created.

They're merely looking at streamlining the old processes [Mark Allen].

Whilst the obvious barriers to use include affordability, proximity and literacy. Bevis England considered that the learning curve of new software de-motivate users who find applications too complicated to learn quickly

so that your frustration also comes in some times in terms of having to use new applications for the first time... in order to supplement other communication strands. That can be frustrating when you don't actually have the specific skills [Bevis England].

Mark Allen suggested that we need to view technology as being for everyone because currently

having technology is seen as either a wish to be young or ostentatious [Mark Allen].

Even where people recognise the potential of ICT there can be a lack of resources to use them effectively such that although

a lot of people can see a lot of capability, the resource is not there to help them do what they'd like to do right across the board [John Johnson].

Mark Allen described this as becoming aware that ICT could be used to support something he wanted to do but that he lacked the personal skills to do it himself, the structural encouragement to do it and the funding to purchase those services externally. Allen recognised that this is a barrier to his own effective use. Information that could be distributed via a website is constantly sent by email and led Allen to view the internal council process for publishing information is insufficient because

the slowness of council getting stuff for me to move from here to there and put it on a website and saying to them I'm going to want control of it myself, I see a threshold coming there but it hasn't quite got to that point yet [Mark Allen].

In this instance the barrier was a wider awareness and specifically the ability to make use of new ICT. However, Allen also saw the technology as a barrier,

I mean when I do group work I'm still waiting for the piece of technology that will allow me to do what I do with my hands, kind of showing concepts and relationships, he says waving his hands about and I think that that is also a barrier [Mark Allen].

For others, whilst some formal training is available, ICT skills are most often acquired through trial and error:

I get frustrated along the way because I don't always get it and... but then I have a little breakthrough... it's like, "Oh, that's how you do it" [Di Jennings].

For Penny Hulse, adopting new technology was frustrating and it was only the support of family members that allowed her to try new ICT and to persevere with them,

I'm constrained and frustrated by [technology] unless I have my 17 year old welded to my hip, really [Penny Hulse].

### **7.3.6 Standards that aid uptake**

One way of promoting access and literacy is to ensure that central and local governments develop standards for infrastructure and policies that support uptake.

Central government's role is setting a national standard, a national direction that all local authorities can adhere to and work the same way and potential provide big picture budgets to support initiatives that support the national goals [Rochelle Edwards].

As discussed in Chapter 2, New Zealand's Digital Strategy aims to increase broadband connectivity and the use of ICT in the community and voluntary sector but it does not directly address issues of citizen participation in democratic processes. Despite this, Edwards

considered the Digital Strategy to be a catalyst for greater public awareness of ICT if government chooses to do this. She saw a risk that the Digital Strategy becomes limited in its usefulness to the ICT industry or civil servants. Legislation has been problematic for Council, not least the Telecommunications Act, which

holds us back from achieving what we're trying to achieve under our Digital City vision and under the Digital Strategy [Rochelle Edwards]<sup>60</sup>.

It is also suggested by Edwards that New Zealand requires a national standard for above ground infrastructure so that telecommunications projects that involve the installation of masts, antenna and satellite dishes – particularly for wireless networks – can be managed more consistently,

if we're going to push for a wireless infrastructure, then what is every council doing and what are our standards? There are lots of opportunities maybe from a resource management perspective to have national standards [Rochelle Edwards].

Edwards observed that resistance to local attempts to develop infrastructure standards has come from the utility providers, who have resisted attempts by council to regulate new ducting and cabling projects.

Within central government, David Cunliffe saw room for further use of the internet for consultation but that more work is required to develop a robust and effective process. Recent examples, he notes, include the Telecommunications Act review and the wireless spectrum. Cunliffe noted that the government has used an online submission and reporting process to manage wireless spectrum submissions before they go to Cabinet.

There's no doubt that electronic means have improved the ability of decision-makers and interest groups to make their views heard and understood, that the richness and reach of

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<sup>60</sup> Since this interview took place a review of the Telecommunications Act review has occurred.

information available to decision-makers has increased. It's not necessarily the same thing as the decision quality having increased, but you'd hope that it would be a factor [David Cunliffe].

## 7.4 Perceiving Value in ICT

Once issues of access and literacy have been addressed, the issue of perceived value remains. Perceiving value in ICT is vital if adoption is to be maintained. Figure 45 shows that perception of value can be further divided into factors of convenience and actual value to the individual.

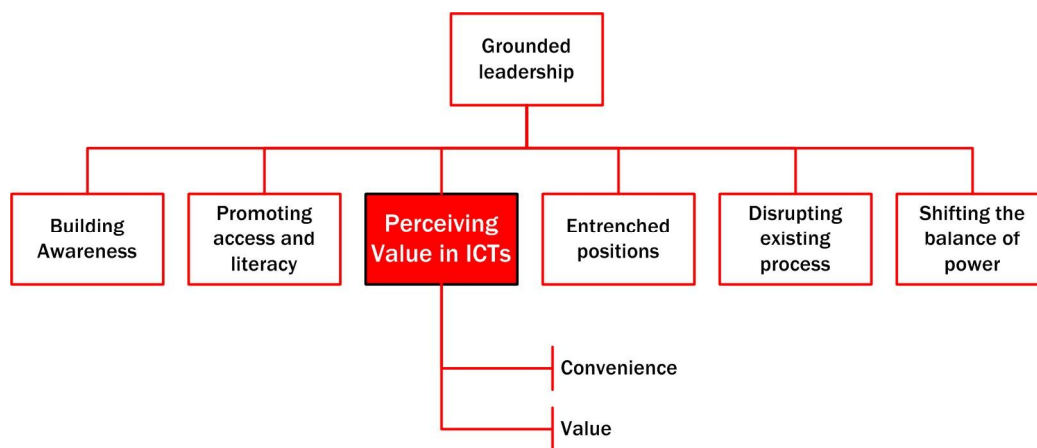


Figure 45: Perceiving value in ICT

For individuals to adopt ICT they must see personal value in them but initial engagement can come through wide range of activities,

people can actually use it for the entertainment and might start using far more for more productive things [Bevis England].

Whilst part of the adoption issue is related to socio-economic conditions, education and geographic barriers, projects to reduce digital inequity must support individuals experiencing the internet themselves and promotion of the potential uses and benefits is needed.

I just think we need to start marketing and we need to keep saying it -say it three times and the message gets through! I think we should be using every public forum that we've got and we should be looking at things like *Trash to Fashion*, which I hear is an incredibly high-tech event, and technology helps make it a fabulous event [Rochelle Edwards].

The key is relating technology to people in ways that they can engage with it not as a technology but as a tool to solve problems or support other activities,

I think there is a fair bit of potential which people aren't being made aware of fully enough [John Johnson]

If adoption is the result of perceived value, then the benefits of this can be offset by the complexity (or perceived complexity) of ICT.

ICT is complicated and can be confusing, so it needs to be explained simply [Penny Hulse].

### **7.4.1 Recognising the convenience of ICT**

Those who have adopted ICT in their interaction between community and Council felt frustrated because others did not share their level of knowledge or skills, thereby limiting the benefits that they felt able to achieve because of

expectations that people would open emails in a certain frame of time. I sent that to you yesterday – what do you mean you don't have it for this morning's meeting [Mark Allen].

Electronic communication does not replace face-to-face communication for building relationships,

preferably very early on, that's got to be done face-to-face to develop that relationship [Di Jennings].

Once the relationship is established, ICT becomes the day-to-day support tool that makes communication easier and more efficient. However, the measure of value or success is not quantifiable but the overall amenity value of the tool,

participation is not the measure of its use. It's like a park; it's not evaluated by the number of people who go through it. [Di Jennings].

Email helps community activists to get closer to the decision-makers within Council and benefits Council officers by being asynchronous and providing electronic copies. Email and remote access via mobile devices keep Councillors in touch, making communication more open and politicians more accessible. However, proximity of access to new communication technologies as well as their always-connected nature changes our expectations and practice of when and where work occurs.

People probably don't need to shout at me on the mobile but they do, because I'm openly accessible [Bob Harvey].

At a political level, the internet was an important convenience tool for communication and reducing cost within local party operations.

Our own electorate committee is mainly, not quite entirely, but mainly on email. We still have to supplement it though, partly because of the age group of some of the members, with mail outs. They're actually very expensive... it adds up. In terms of cost at 45 cents a stamp [David Cunliffe].

At a wider political level, awareness was starting to increase,

there is a growing recognition right across the political spectrum that electronic enablement of political organisations is absolutely vital [David Cunliffe].

## 7.5 Entrenched Positions

So far the categories described relate to adoption and overcoming barriers to the effective use of ICT. However, barriers to the adoption of ICT for community-centric democracy also exist in non-technology forms and this next category explores the entrenched positions held by stakeholders from council and the community that inhibit the potential to create more effective and deliberative models of engagement. Figure 46 shows that five sub-categories were identified, including an inability to let go of process ownership and the risk aversion of local government as well as issues in the community with existing power-brokers attempting to maintain control over discourses.

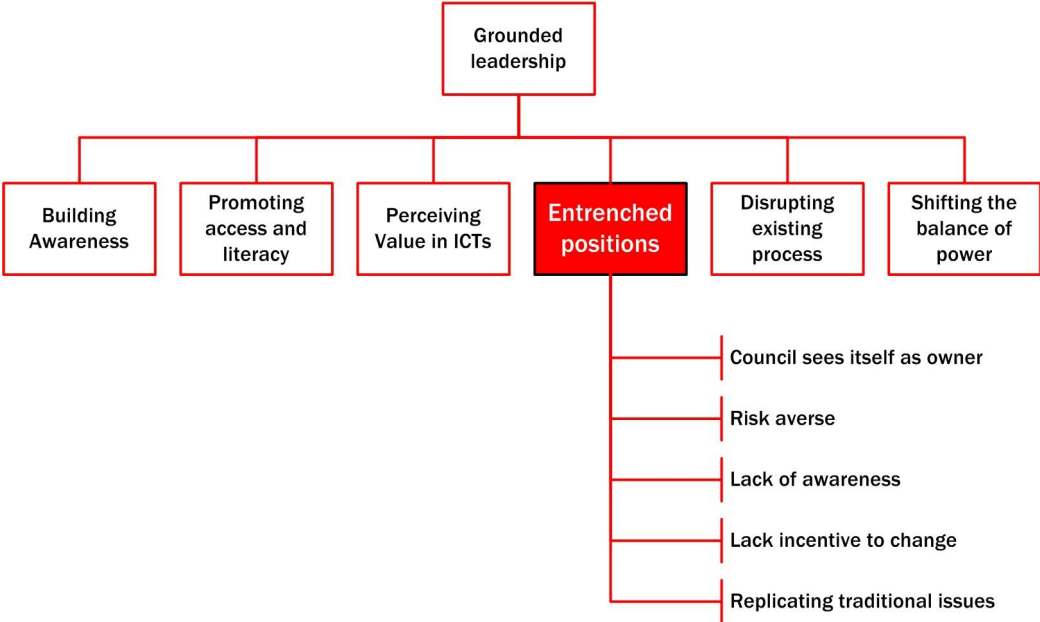


Figure 46: Entrenched positions

### 7.5.1 Council sees itself as owner

It emerges from the participant interviews that there is a leadership role needed to transform local government thinking and processes in order to utilise new ICT. To some degree this must come from within, although it can be influenced by pressure from outside. However, there is a belief within some parts of council that it, not the community, is the expert when it comes to models of engagement,



I'm making the assumption here that the council are the experts because they've got the specialists skilled people working in the field as opposed to the lay person that might not [Rochelle Edwards].

Despite the legislative requirements of the Local Government Act 2002 and the general perception amongst all the local participants that Waitakere City is relatively good at consultation compared to other local authorities, there are clear examples of council obstructing progress on initiatives, often inadvertently due to ignorance, lack of funding or the need to formalise council's role and work-streams. Examples also exist of political interference to stall projects perceived as a threat – the original 'EcoTech Working Party' was rendered ineffectual by a senior sitting councillor and the council's inherent silo mentality has led to clear examples of political infighting and empire building with projects stalling as a result. Such examples demonstrate a lack of recognition for 'informal' knowledge emerging from the community.

[The project], despite being community led and initiated has been hijacked by a council silo with no idea about what they are doing, which is useless at consultation and arrogantly presses ahead as if it knows best – which it clearly doesn't if the clamour from the community 'partners' is anything to go by [Researcher's diary].

That said, council has engaged positively and in good faith in other areas, does have the scale and budget to lead and is legally charged with engaging. Council is clearly better resourced than the community it serves and, for Edwards, this avoided a risk that other groups might not be as attentive to a wide spectrum of ideas as council is required to be and scrutinised to ensure compliance. Government agencies are sometimes perceived as a 'benevolent bully' by community participants and this is reflected in statements from other community organisations (New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, 2006; Spelman & Sefuiva, 2007), however community or interest groups can also be perceived by government as

biased in the way they want to consult [Rochelle Edwards].

This presents a challenge because, despite seeing itself as the expert on consultation, council has not as yet attempted to engage with how this might be done online or through other electronic methods. Edwards suggested that this is not a problem unique to Waitakere City.

I don't really see a lot of evidence of other councils doing so either... I don't get that sense [Rochelle Edwards].

She, along with other participants, noted that Waitakere City is well known for being a leader in the way that it consults and is perceived as being good at engaging with the communities using traditional submission processes and workshops and this is supported by literature (such as D. Craig & Lerner, 2002). If this position of Council as expert does not shift then it arguably leaves communities with their only option to engage on council's terms,

just buying into the projects I suppose. Once again it comes back to the uptake, I see it as council being the delivery mechanism and the communities being the ones that pick it up [Rochelle Edwards].

Indeed, where local government has chosen to innovate in their use of ICT, citizen response has been positive. As Carol Hayward noted, Bristol's adoption of online consultation methods was a timing issue, related to the political landscape, which

occurred because timing was right... a change from Labour to hung (Labour/LibDem<sup>61</sup>) council and more recently to LibDem, who seem more open to new ideas and use of ICT... so support of elected councillors was in part at least a key to their success [Carol Hayward].

However, both Carol Hayward and Dan Randow identified issues with regard to who controls the process. The experience in UK local government suggests that management can open or close discussion. Like in Waitakere City, levels of fear exist in local government

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<sup>61</sup> UK Labour Party and Liberal Democratic Party.

where there is resistance to losing too much control over democratic dialogue. As Carol Hayward notes, Wolverhampton City Council pre-moderated all postings to its discussion forums, which is not only impractical and resource hungry but appears to stifle discussion.

## 7.5.2 Risk averse

Wright (2006) notes that governments are inherently risk averse and that this is the case for eDemocracy, which is compounded further by technological illiteracy. Despite the incumbent view in Waitakere City Council of itself as the expert in public consultation and democratic engagement, Wright's comments are echoed in these findings, which support a natural tendency in local government towards risk aversion. This has manifested itself in a number of ways in Waitakere City and was noted by a number of the participants. Two clear examples of resistance to change are the refusal of the Waitakere City Council to transfer ownership of the WaitakereOnline portal to an independent board rather than the council-run editorial board and the resistance to online discussion forums being hosted within council-operated websites.

I guess civil servants are just inherently conservative and will look at a big picture idea and say, look how can we deliver a piece of this and make it happen. You know, we're scared to think too big, that's the role of the politician [Rochelle Edwards].

Unfortunately, whilst political interest in such issues is growing, albeit, slowly, there is little political pressure on council officers to overcome this reticence to change.

I think that one of the problems that we have is that it's generally older people who are in council... and they don't understand the potential of the technology and its lag affect that we're going to have to work through [Mark Allen].

Di Jennings suggests that Waitakere City Council was perhaps more open than most to innovative models of engagement but that

I think they're still going to have their ideas about it because... I mean, yeah, there's [ICT]... its hard stuff. [Di Jennings].

Allen suggested that

there will probably be one or two big issues that all of a sudden people will say, do you know that ICT stuff that really helped us deal with that, work with that one [Mark Allen].

For Mayor Bob Harvey, Waitakere City has been a pioneer in a number of areas – most visibly with regard to sustainability – however, he was disappointed with the failure of council to adopt ICT as part of their process in the mistaken belief that ICT does not support the other aims and objectives of the city.

We haven't actually grasped it with both hands. I think we've grasped it with one hand, and the other hands are good for trees and cleaning up the swamps and wetlands and streams [Bob Harvey].

The effect is that there is resistance to ICT from within the operational side of council. Overcoming this barrier is a challenge for communities and for council. Councils rely on formalised submission processes for annual and long-term plans, community meetings and local publications. This is Council's own construction of democratic engagement and consultation and, as Mark Allen noted, they might be critiquing the effectiveness of these models but they are not necessarily seeing ICT as a solution.

### **7.5.3 Lack of awareness**

Lack of awareness is a barrier to the uptake of eDemocracy for local government. As Penny Hulse observed,

[eDemocracy] is something that's just beyond my grasp at the moment [Penny Hulse].

Entrenched positions initially suggest someone who is a late adopter and not interested in new ways of doing, however, it can also apply to those who are otherwise considered to be strong advocates for ICT but whose view on the narrowness of democratic process is entrenched. For example, when discussing the Annual Plan submission process, England posits that

running two levels of consultation can be seen as being inefficient and we don't have the IT penetration to run it solely electronically [Bevis England].

Yet in reality other participants pointed out that submissions are amalgamated regardless of origin and it required little additional resource to run parallel consultation streams – indeed online submissions streamline the existing process by reducing re-keying of information. If eDemocracy is to advance then it is both council officers and councillors who must understand and be literate in ICT and the data suggests that such a level has not been reached for either and that this is not an area where awareness was high for Waitakere City Council.

We put huge amounts of money into running projects like the [Waitakere] Ranges protection consultations... when we suggested [values-based eDemocracy software] it fell flat... it's too new and people aren't clear on the benefits yet [Rochelle Edwards].

Leadership is required at a political level and current awareness levels make this difficult to achieve,

I don't think that unfortunately the leadership in the council actually recognise the mega leap that would happen in the way the city would function as a consequence of this and that's one of the big barriers I see [Mark Allen].

As Edwards noted, the issue is not just about using ICT on a day to day basis but also the strategic implications and what impact new technologies will have on city-wide infrastructure and planning regulations.

What we don't have an understanding of is what is required to deliver broadband to the next two kilometres, how big does that junction box need to be on that street corner. What are the dimensions, how much air do you need around it and how strong does the box need to be [Rochelle Edwards].

Unfortunately, the telecommunications providers will not supply this information to Council, citing commercial confidences and Council has no legal recourse to obtain it. Such lack of understanding extends to the structural model of local government, which encourages bureaucracy and would appear to discourage radical change.

I think that's one of the problems we've got with the bureaucracies. It's always going to exist no matter how flat the structure is or how big the geography it covers; whether it be the super city of Auckland or whether it be the Henderson Borough Council. Understand the access points and understanding the decision-making process and what issues to decide at what level is always going to be a problem. But I think it's a commonly recognised issue [Mark Allen].

There is a general consensus amongst the participants that local elected representatives have been, at best, late adopters of technology.

There's one councillor here that has 600 unopened emails... two councillors said to me "Never do emails, they're traceable", and I said "Oh, why would you be concerned?" "Well, people can just check on you." [Bob Harvey].

Isolation is an issue here, perhaps because the area is new for Council, however, it is noted that local government, despite some national initiatives is generally left to its own devices when it comes to promoting the use of ICT.

Manukau is doing something different because the demographics most probably a little bit different to Auckland City and to what Rodney and North Shore are. There are some

common denominators through there and we're not actually working together in that stream to be quite honest [John Johnson].

This suggests that there is potential to leverage these different activities at a higher – perhaps regional – level and it is already occurring to some extent with broadband infrastructure but is once again siloed rather than taking a strategic view of ICT.

Don't let just the traffic guys go off and... because they went off and we just got the proposals for the cameras and stuff and I said but hang on, let's take a back seat and look at this infrastructure you need and not just for that but for the whole city, for the region [John Johnson].

## 7.5.4 Lack incentive to change

There is a paradox in many large organisations that, whilst ICT can become empowering for individuals, they are seen as dangerous to the organisation if they are not controlled. Within council, this created a barrier for those who wish to innovate as they were limited by what they were permitted to do themselves and

where I would tend to do that is actually at home because while I'm at work, one, there's a lot of constraints within the organisation about you're not allowed to set up any web pages, but secondly the work processes of getting those things done require collaboration of some of the others [Mark Allen].

This micro-management of ICT within council was quite obvious to others.

When we talk of this communication world around us it seems to be difficult... I have to ask somebody somewhere, "Please sir, can I do Google?" "Well, I'll think about it, Mayor Harvey", you know [Bob Harvey].

At the institutional level there was a lack of demonstrative understanding of the potential of ICT and willingness to engage and, as Mayor Harvey notes, whilst the city was in many ways a leader in its promotion of ICT, this was not reflected broadly within council because

it's the willpower and it's the energy, and I think that I've been disappointed by this council... in attitude, not by deed [Bob Harvey].

This is perhaps a symptom of local government where councillors are typically retired professionals, indeed in Waitakere City the youngest councillor was in his mid-40s and the oldest 83.

### 7.5.5 Replicating traditional issues

Participation in the physical world is often dominated by an inside elite, where "a small group of people [are] involved in a disproportionately large number of governance structures" (Skidmore, Bound, & Lownsborough, 2006, p.22). It is an argument of eDemocracy advocates that new models of engagement will engage those who were previously disengaged or disinterested and that spaces will be created allowing for more discursive debate and the potential for deliberative democracy. However, the contrary is also a possibility, namely that the internet simply opens up a new space for the same strongly held views to be published and to act as a place for those with similar views to congregate (Sunstein, 2000; Witschge, 2002).

It may be adding to the polarisation of political views within the community. I mean if, if you're a, let's say you're in the United States, you're a Right Wing Christian Republican Neo-Con, fed a daily diet six days a week of Neo-Con drivel and on Sunday you go to Church and you get it in a different form... You are easily put in a world where all your information channels are self-reinforcing [David Cunliffe].

As Di Jennings observed, it is equally as possible to manipulate debate online as it is offline such that pre-determined outcome is reached. The challenge for online models of



engagement is to overcome some of the barriers to traditional forms of engagement and consultation.

The problem with major issues is polarised debate. The extremes are important but this means that the middle ground is unrepresented and in some cases does not feel safe or able to put their view across so it never gets captured [Penny Hulse].

This exclusion is anomalous with a healthy democracy because

the centre ground of politics tends to be people who can see both sides of an argument then make up their mind [David Cunliffe].

Whilst the internet does enable more advance forms of consultation and deliberation, this is not of itself sufficient. Council (and others) must first develop and adopt new processes if they are to effectively engage in new ways.

I think my experience of that is that that's quite resource hungry and it takes a different kind of thinking upfront and a process of mandating those approaches that requires quite a strong different way of thinking [Mark Allen].

Even when new processes emerge or existing ones are adapted for new models of engagement, it is important to recognise that there remains a lack of homogeneity within the city,

I'm conscious that when we go and consult on stuff people are coming back from their own quite narrow little agenda [Di Jennings].

This is not of itself problematic as initial views are often "narrowly self-regarding" and are therefore susceptible to change from a deliberative process (Miller, 1993, p.189). More problematic can be those who already hold strongly held opinions that lead them to be motivated and engaged but to also dominate new electronic fora.

I guess I just have the concern that you do have the usual suspects ranting about the same topic and they dominate that e-conversation [Rochelle Edwards].

This diversity extends to strategic thinkers and those within Council's strategy area who are interested in and able to consider macro and long term issues versus the concerns of individuals, whose focus is much more immediate and personal.

You know, Joe Bloggs sitting in Glen Eden hasn't even considered it. He's just thinking about what I want now and what'll work for me... so it's not quite the community doesn't know but it's like how... it's... there's a big education component there [Di Jennings].

Holding firm to existing ideas about democracy can be challenging when trying to understand the design of consultation models and the principles of democracy that strengthen them. As Mark Allen observed, these do not appear to be well understood within the community, instead there is often an overly strong focus on a single, sometimes relatively small, issue. One recent example was the colour of recycling 'wheelie-bins'.

The thing is [Single issue fanatics] would've gone "it's the wrong colour". Never mind that it's actually part of an international coding which is what I found out when I complained about the colour [Mark Allen].

This can lead to an unrealistic expectation as to the nature and perceived effectiveness of the consultation that occurs, further compounded when citizens lack an understanding of how much 'democracy' actually costs the ratepayer,

that those people will say we need to keep talking this out, we need to keep talking. There's a point where you say I'm sorry, we've just spent \$150,000, 10 meetings, senior management debating this issue about what colour. It's not that important [Mark Allen].

Community level discussion can be difficult because of the strong focus on issues and concomitant lack of knowledge of process, enabling legislation or recognition of the strategic context.

The importance of strategy and the big picture but a failing on the part of people to be able to deal with big picture stuff, hence the focus on issues [Penny Hulse].

Another side of the entrenched positions seen in local government is that it tends to be the same people who make submissions and attend council and community deliberations on issues. Online models can certainly shift this power-base, as has been seen with the Aotearoa Ethnic Network<sup>62</sup>.

AEN has shifted the locus of control in the ethnic community– the ‘old blokes in suits’ that control the ethnic sector aren’t involved, so it’s a space for younger voices to step forward and – perhaps most important – to build and extend their networks amongst others like them [Researcher’s diary].

These are the people who are motivated but engaging using the internet does not guarantee others will also become engaged or whether the same voices will simply adopt and monopolise the new models as well. It does not guarantee that local government will adopt a more participatory or deliberative model, rather than continue to focus on technocratic process.

the single issue fanatics, there are some who are bloody good experts and so therefore it’s about positioning the fanatic in relation to the issue so that their stuff is heard, but if you’re just process oriented, who cares how clever they are; they’re just getting in the way of making the job happen [Mark Allen].

ICT is not a panacea even for those who are well connected

the challenge with ICT, is people thinking that because they've got a link to their MP or to their councillor, they're going to listen to what I say [Mark Allen].

## 7.6 Disrupting existing process

Projects to increase awareness of, access to and literacy in ICT are not sufficient to overcome the problems identified in the previous category. For this to happen, there is a need to challenge and disrupt existing processes within the democratic framework such that new, more community centred processes can emerge. ICT offers the potential to do this but need to be driven by a socially-oriented mandate for change, as shown in Figure 47.

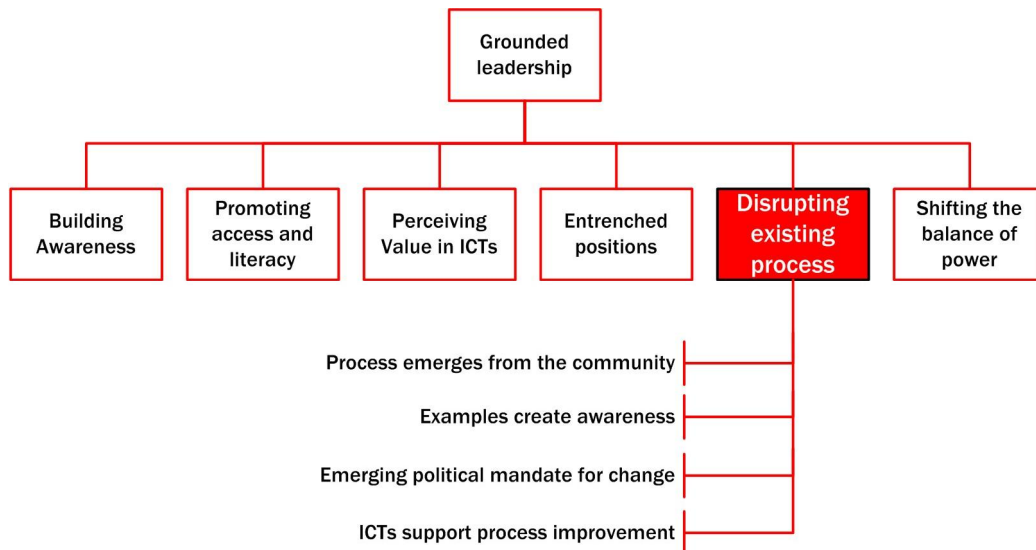


Figure 47: Disrupting existing processes.

### 7.6.1 Process emerges from the community

eDemocracy processes can emerge from both council and the community. However, there was a power imbalance given council's size and resourcing. Much of the agenda for CI initiatives in Waitakere City has been driven by community but in order to gain sufficient traction council must become engaged in development and delivery. Examples included the WaitakereOnline city web-portal, which was championed by community activists but only came into existence when the Waitakere EcoTech Advisory Group – an inter-community,

<sup>62</sup> See [www.aen.org.nz](http://www.aen.org.nz).

business and council group meeting under the auspices of council – agreed to investigate it further. Ultimately, internal champions within council were able to secure operational funding that was not otherwise available to the community.

Community input to the advancement of ICT is needed at both the strategic and grass-roots levels. At this early stage of maturity it is unrealistic to expect council to be innovative or lead in this area, more realistically

local government needs to see a clear and tangible output – a clear project that's happening and preferably one that's a big success and then we want to ask, why are you doing it and where does it fit. Its bottom-up and top-down [Rochelle Edwards].

Community perspectives help council to judge whether progress is being made,

I was using you as a guide, because you reassured me, and I keep coming back to all the people that are around me to say “It's going too slow”, or “It's going about the right speed”, so the [Digital City] strategy, as I said before, around council things, when they see policy and process working together they will do anything [Bob Harvey].

A second example of community-based ideas is the Learning Centre concept, which entails the installation of computers and support within local libraries. The model originated from a community-based project and has now spread to other locations in the city through the council-run libraries service, where

the Ranui Learning Centre, the community drove that it and it became quite a successful little model [John Johnson].

Receptiveness on the part of council to community ideas is not just about being open to new ways of operating, it is also part of council demonstrating that it listens to and engages with community such that creative and emergent ideas can be adopted and promoted.

I think it's not how and can; I think they need to, otherwise you're not going to get that engagement [John Johnson].

For those involved with community ICT, there is also the opportunity to learn from other parts of the local community, who have already been successful in raising the profile of their own initiatives such that there is now much greater public and council acceptance of them.

The link in Waitakere with the creative industries... even the organics people; it seems to me that organics people are actually leaders. They've made a choice outside of the norm to do something. If you combine all that kind of stuff and the general creative climate in Waitakere I think that there is something coalescing around that for ICT [Di Jennings].

Dan Randow observed that ICT is often considered for its content and that such content is seen as normative, yet where it is being used to advance democratic debate or challenge established practices and processes, it is often conversation that becomes the pre-requisite to success.

## 7.6.2 Examples create awareness

Citizens are able to submit online to the annual plan process and to other projects that council is consulting over. Despite not being heavily promoted, the online model is attracting an increasing number of submissions. The process works well for council,

there's been a great success of people submitting to the annual plan online, that's really picking up. I just think it's convenience... you can always write a letter and make a submission but this is making it quick and convenient and you've got that record [Rochelle Edwards].

Promoting ICT through examples has already been discussed along with opportunities to engage more people and motivate them to become users of ICT, however, examples can also be used to demonstrate to later adopters what the technology is capable of doing in a democratic setting. The governments Digital Strategy includes funding for community-based

initiatives but does not specifically identify eDemocracy as a work stream. Conversely, the UK government's Local eDemocracy Project has earmarked £10M in funding and places a strong focus on developing exemplars of good practice in eDemocracy that other local authorities can then adopt. As Carol Hayward noted, this fund has delivered projects that can act as catalysts to build awareness and lead process transformation in local democracy, including the use of ePanels, online consultation and ePetitions. Hayward recalled the use of one particular ePetition in Bristol,

the recycling petition was initiated by a councillor after hearing comments from the community. Both her local party leaders and council officers were initially obstructive and discouraging, however, she went ahead. Once the petition gained significant public interest (eventually it had 5,000 responses), the council department started investigating options. This was despite having previously said it wasn't affordable or doable [Carol Hayward].

The ePetition's success appears to stem from timeliness and a strong already connected network of environmentalist who were able to forward the information around their email networks. However, this example demonstrated how council (both bureaucratic and political) had misjudged the strength of feeling on the issue within the local community. This example is part of the AskBristol project within Bristol City Council. The project has been promoted to citizens online and through traditional media outlets. However, Bristol has also gone further, producing bookmarks, postcards to highlight specific issues and beer-mats.

Waitakere City was considerably further behind in its use of ICT than Bristol but such examples are useful because council officers are able to see and relate to them. They serve to break down some of the initial resistance to ICT, which seems to result, at least in part, from a lack of prior knowledge and a lack of time to engage with new ideas. Within the city, the Digital City Strategy was an early attempt to highlight the importance and benefit of ICT in a non-technical way,

I'd like to see the Digital Strategy, or at least our Digital City Strategy being at the public level and actually available on the front counter at council, online and as a mailout if people want it [Rochelle Edwards].

A key attribute of the strategy was its use of non-technical language and its positioning of ICT as a tool not as the focus of the problem.

I think the digital strategy is milestone stuff for any city, and for us, because it changes attitude of the council and the mindset, and it opens up terrific opportunities, and so I think it's one of the key parts of this council and this council's future... When we opened that, you know, I thought a milestone had been reached, and I thought it had been a little painful getting there and, for me, far too slow [Bob Harvey].

Projects like WaitakereOnline build awareness about what ICT can do and attempt to engage citizens in using different ways to connect with council, they include the provision of an events calendar on the portal and recognise that, for many, the initial value of ICT comes from leisure and entertainment, as well as communication.

I think the whole entertainment industry's been liberated more with the use of technology and ICT and that seems to have a major impact on people, just music like that there and enable to use that through technology. It is simple enough that people use now [John Johnson].

The portal has demonstrated strong growth in visitor numbers and this in turn feeds back positively into council processes, where an early understanding of the strategic importance of ICT starts to emerge,

I think those are now starting to be brought together and I think council, in the next LTCCP, is going to bring that in as one of its key strategic platforms [John Johnson].

At a community level, ICT needs to be positioned in ways that encourage adoption and such that citizens are not intimidated or overwhelmed by technology.



That's where ICT's workshop should be aimed at, is the benefits and how you could do things differently. Forget that you can link up broadband and you can have so many megabytes. That means nothing. It's what you can do with it and what difference it makes to you [John Johnson].

Adoption also requires traction and maintenance. Johnson likens this to the requirement to maintain a website continuously and cites the examples of an experimental online chat session organised by Mayor Harvey, which created a lot of publicity about the use of ICT and generated strong community interest but which was also ad-hoc and not maintained.

The trouble with that is – and here I criticise us in the council – we should make sure that continues. You don't do these things as one off and then suddenly... you've got to do it more regularly or you've got to get something like that where there's an ongoing thing and maybe it's sort of meet the council or councillor and you're sort of with mayor and you bring some other high profile councillors into it and others and then rotate. So either monthly always got someone there to build up that interest [John Johnson].

### 7.6.3 Political mandate for change

Community has been the source of most of the pressure to utilize ICT within Waitakere City and also where many of the ideas have emerged from, however, it was equally clear that community groups and individuals lack the scale and resources to create and fully sustain CI initiatives. Therefore, for eDemocracy to take root in a local community, strong local government support is inevitably required and

the role of making that happen is going to be those who stand to gain the most from it. [Bevis England].

The value proposition for local government is that

a government that wants to have a responsive electorate and wants to know what's going on, ought to be doing an awful lot more to support the development of eDemocracy tools. [Bevis England].

ICT delivers politicians new tools to assess the public mood particularly in relation to

hotly contested public issues, some of the conscience Bills, Civil Union Bill, [have] floods of emails on both sides of the issue, just thousands and thousands of emails and of course MPs are sensitive [David Cunliffe].

This is also the case in local government where emails received from constituents allow politicians to gauge interest in an issue and this allows them to be more responsive to changing or emerging public opinions,

[former MP] Jonathan Hunt used to say “If you get one letter of complaint, it’s not an issue. If you get five, it is” [Bob Harvey].

Bimber (1999, p.425) offers a note of caution against such a situation, noting that politicians often receive “floods of emails from citizens acting without lasting convictions” and so it is important to understand more about the motivations and long-standing convictions of the senders rather than make a quantitative assessment of communication flows.

The need for a political mandate to drive ICT was most obvious in the Digital Strategy, which has been created as a whole of government approach to ICT<sup>63</sup>. Much of the political drive for this has come from David Cunliffe as Minister of Communications and Information Technology and was driven out of his personal attendance at the first World Summit on the Information Society Conference in Geneva in 2003.

My first reaction was I'm bloody glad it happened and talking to David Cunliffe personally it seemed to me he took a leadership role and said I'm just going to have you buggers stay in my office and have pizza until you've bloody solved it, which I think needed to happen because I think he's fighting the same thing that we see in council, that kind of partial participation [Mark Allen].

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<sup>63</sup> Discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Di Jennings also noted the Minister's contribution but, like Allen, was sceptical of how far this extends into government itself.

We've got a really good advocate in David's positional strategy and he's a very effective advocate, I think, but how far that goes beyond David I don't know [Di Jennings].

There are pockets of interest in ICT amongst local councillors, though generally speaking the elected councillors have been limited in their adoption of ICT and in their ability to grasp the complexities of ICT in the community sector and potential use in council process.

I think a lot of our councillors are really from the last century, you know, they... you know, when you've got [name removed] in there and, you know, like, they're not up to play, so I think our councillors... are probably behind the game [Di Jennings].

Jennings, Allen and Rochelle Edwards all saw significant value in having a champion within the elected council and one who can see the benefits, whilst being a self-acknowledged late adopter is Penny Hulse,

it's actually got some benefits in terms of the council process and the democratic process in terms of immediacy [Penny Hulse].

There are strong aversions to ICT amongst some of the councillors (discussed elsewhere in this chapter). However, for Mayor Harvey, these are around increasing accountability and he had no problem with the traceability or archiving of electronic correspondence.

You send a shitty email to a ratepayer, he sends it to the Minister of Local Government and it's traceable. I have been pursued by Prime Ministers for my emails and phone bills over the getting the dirt on Dover [Samuels MP] [Bob Harvey].

Councillor Hulse has identified personal and political benefits of ICT to support her role in council.

I just sent an email to the Western Leader [newspaper] who I'm having kind of a battle with at the moment. And I've kind of used the fact that there were no visual cues and no, I wasn't tempted to kind of soften it, twinkle or hug or anything like that. And it was quite useful to be able to do it by email. So when you need to be tough, email's probably the best way [Penny Hulse].

The challenge for community, therefore, was how to engage with this increasing awareness by way of supporting and briefing councillors who have the potential to become advocates within the system and clearly identifying more strategic applications of ICT based on existing levels of use and awareness. Perhaps supporting this active promotion of ICT is Bob Harvey's comment that

we have got to be aware that the job of local government is also to be proactive [Bob Harvey].

These findings suggest that ICT can make governments more proactive. Mayor Harvey has been a key champion in promoting ICT in Waitakere. He was acknowledged by all the local participants in this research as a key player in the adoption of ICT and his own enthusiasm for technology is clear.

When I became the Mayor in 1992, clearly this was an environmental city and so for the first few years I was absolutely obsessed with getting the environmental things right because it was, after all, an eco-city, and I guess by about 1996 I was aware that it needed, and it was a desperate need, I thought to match the environment with what I called hi-tech, and so if I'd gone for high touch, which was emotional and sustainability, I then needed to match it with a communication programme, and so I started to talk globally, when I went to environmental conferences, about how could I make this a wired city [Bob Harvey].

Harvey also promoted ICT at a national level, attempting to strategically increase awareness of their importance and value within policy development, despite his frustration with the lack of awareness and understanding the he encountered,

at the same time I was President of the Labour Party and I couldn't believe how slow the Labour Party, or the possible Labour Government, was about technology. They just didn't seem to get it. They didn't seem to get it they didn't want to know it. They thought it was someone else's business, and I said to them "I really think you have to lift the game, if you're going to be the government in 1999"... I'm talking as President in 1997-98. Well, I think they did. The Prime Minister started to talk about hi-tech [Bob Harvey].

For Mayor Harvey, it was important to create a vision of the city as a sustainable city enabled through technology. Waitakere City is widely regarded as a pioneer in environmental areas and he had a vision for this crossing over into the innovative use of ICT. The reality, however, has been somewhat different with progress being much slower than he had hoped for.

I talked about the communication highway and I talked about this city being a pioneer in that, and do you know what I think that I've been disappointed, but you've cheered me up that we haven't actually grasped it with both hands. I think we've grasped it with one hand, and the other hands are good for trees and cleaning up the swamps and wetlands and streams [Bob Harvey].

Within central government there is now widespread use of email and websites for political promotion and communication.

I think there is a growing recognition right across the political spectrum that electronic enablement of political organisations is absolutely vital [David Cunliffe].

Cunliffe cited some examples that he considered to have been leaders in the use of ICT in national politics.

Steven Franks, with his Steven Franks Online, which was basically an email push newsletter right through the business community. It was very effective. Robson Online, Robson On Politics when Matt Robson was in Parliament. Obviously not good enough to save him, but he used large scale bulk fax and email to distribute his personal monthly newsletter [David Cunliffe].

Many MPs have personal websites, David Cunliffe has three (one ministerial, one party site and one personal site for his electorate) and he acknowledged that an online presence is not static and must evolve,

I'm in the process of looking at [the electorate website] very hard to see how we can update it. It was pretty much up with the play when I launched it five years ago and it's now quite out of date [David Cunliffe].

This uptake of ICT amongst politicians is significant as a political mandate for the adoption of ICT will emerge more strongly through better understanding of them amongst politicians. As Cunliffe noted, ICT has

productivity advantages for our economy I hope, but in politics it certainly keeps us on our toes more [David Cunliffe].

Bristol demonstrates how a political mandate for the adoption of ICT is required before eDemocracy projects can achieve any traction.

## **7.6.4 ICT supports process improvement**

Whilst the other themes relating to the disruption of existing processes are human-centric, ICT offers opportunities to refine and improve technical processes. This is equally true for democratic processes and, whilst advocacy and leadership is required to harness ICT in this way, technology of itself offers potential benefits at this level. Bevis England saw ICT empowering citizens to pursue their interests in relation to their interaction with government, however, they can also change that process of engagement and interaction.

Adopting ICT creates the opportunity to further refine processes and enable more deliberative models of engagement within communities and between community and council. Examples of this occurring were limited in Waitakere but some already discussed include the use of online submission to council, the role of email in support the Waitakere Wellbeing and Collaboration project and the less formal interface provided by WaitakereOnline. ICT's impact on the current democratic process within Waitakere was also reflected in the following example,

we've probably thought a lot more about getting information up on our website, about improving our website, about, you know, making sure that we just sort of send out email notification on meetings and big issues. And we're just thinking about this as a kind of more natural medium to work in now than we would have a long time, you know, even a couple of years ago [Penny Hulse].

Within central government, ICT has had significant impact on processes but their impact on democracy has been less visible. David Cunliffe saw the potential for ICT to create flatter structures within government and between government agencies and citizens.

What it does is instead of a steep pyramid, you've got something that's a much flatter structure [David Cunliffe].

So that

it's much more of a network. And I think this will fundamentally change how we operate Government for the better... and I regard [ICT] infrastructure as being a stimulant to process redesign often [David Cunliffe].

ICT, in other words offer the potential to transform government processes,

I quite freely talk about transforming Government, or reinventing Government, because I don't think that it's an overstatement of what we could possibly do [David Cunliffe].

## 7.7 Shifting the balance of power

If the disruptive techniques described in the previous category are to become successfully entrenched within local democratic process, then a shift in the balance of power away from council officers and elites in the community must occur. The new processes emerging from the actions described above must become widely accepted and this occurs through demonstrated successes in re-engaging and re-empowering citizens, including as Figure 48 shows, the role of government-community partnerships.

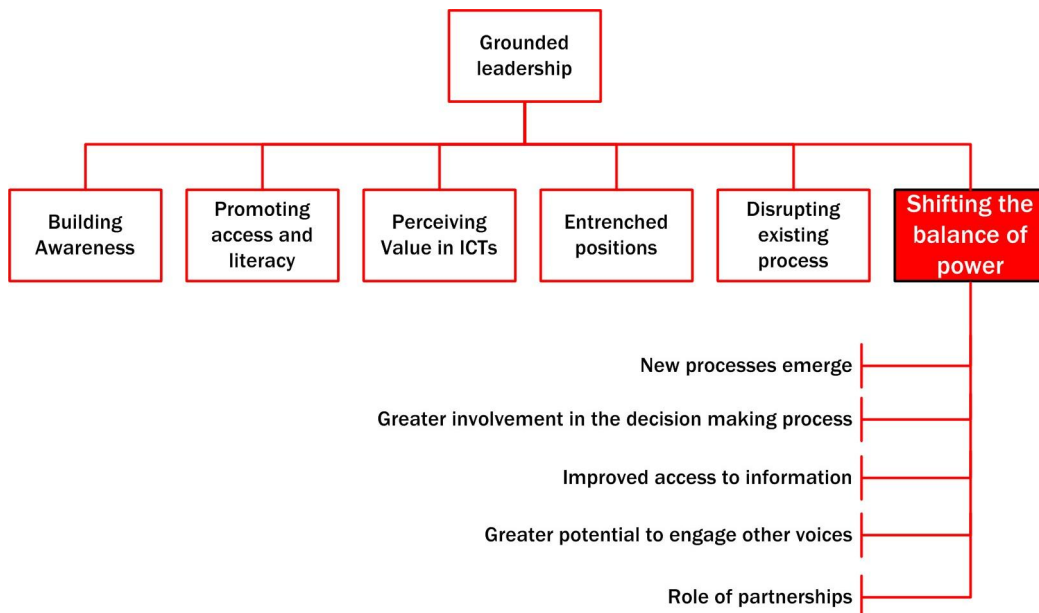


Figure 48: Shifting the balance of power.

### 7.7.1 New processes emerge

ICT has been empowering for those at the community level because they improve communication speed and range, allowing more people to be contacted more quickly and providing



the ability to get the information quickly, the ability to establish a level of interaction which would be very hard to maintain without making effective use of ICT [Bevis England].

The benefit is mirrored in David Cunliffe's example of his Labour colleague, Mahara Okeroa MP, whose Te Tai Tonga electorate is the largest in the country<sup>64</sup>. Okeroa used an electronic newsletter (or ePanui) as his principal campaign tool and retained his seat despite Labour losing four of the six Māori seats.

It's regarded as having been extremely successful at having lead to a solid strength win in his majority, in the face of a strong challenge from the Māori Party [David Cunliffe].

For Cunliffe, ICT provided increased speed and reduced cost of maintaining contact with party members and supporters within his own electorate. However, he noted that not all of this electorate members use email. England has built a broad virtual network of people with interest in ICT at a community level.

Based on the work [WorkRaft has] done over the last twelve months, I've probably got about forty new contacts. The entire [Waitakere Eco Tech Action] mailing list grew out of people expressing interest and getting in touch. Supplemented by people that we thought we ought to be in touch with and who's name and email addresses were readily accessible on the web [Bevis England].

England expressed the opinion that ICT has led to contact with people who would not otherwise have been known or contactable by him. However, he considered that, no matter how empowering ICT is and how well suited it is for maintaining contact, traction is gained at a community level by holding face-to-face meetings. Whilst ICT provides an ongoing platform for support,

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<sup>64</sup> Te Tai Tonga is a Māori electorate that includes the Wellington Region, all of the South Island, Stewart Island and the Chatham Islands. In contrast, there are 16 general electorates in the South Island alone.

the whole WETA project, that only happened once we got together in a room and talked [Bevis England].

Electronic communication extends the reach of individuals and groups.

Yes, you can get in touch with people you can't otherwise meet. People in more remote settings, people who you're not going to bump into socially. You can utilise the technologies in a number of ways, you won't get people ringing you but you might get people visiting a website because they've Googled a certain term and they might email and the liaison can continue [Bevis England].

Where discussions occur, England suggested, ICT can lead to higher quality feedback, however, he cautioned that acquisition of skills can impact on this but

it depends on how well you disseminate the availability of the materials. You're also going to get, perhaps, an awful lot more ill-informed contact from people who are just doing it because it's easy [Bevis England].

England believed that leadership is required to translate this experience to the more wide spread use of eDemocracy tools and that

without leadership from the top, this initiative will not have the mana<sup>65</sup> to engage the partners that are required to make it fly [Bevis England].

He suggested that, whilst the community has a role in eDemocracy initiatives, this is not where such projects should be positioned, rather he saw the need to privilege engagement at the government agency level if the agenda is to move forward. For Rochelle Edwards, the 'e' in eDemocracy represented convenience, both for engaging with communities and for disseminating information more effectively to them. She shared England's view that the process of electronic engagement is likely to be driven from the centre (in this case, council),

not least because of its perceived impartiality, macro view and resources, but also contends that council needs to be receptive to new ideas, especially when ICT is not well understood internally.

Having the community telling us how to consult... it's positive as well as it means you're going to get a lot more buy in to how the consultation works. I guess consultation can be really useful or really worthless, depending on how it's designed, so I'd like to see a level of council controlling the way it's done. But certainly, if the community have ideas that council across the board thinks works well and works for both parties, then sure, pick it up [Rochelle Edwards].

Edwards commented that projects like the WaitakereOnline web portal have been designed as an alternative way to engage people and provide access to what is mainly council information but, compared to the official council website, is

a less conservative online presence, so if there was a site or a model or something that was available the portal could link to it and provide a closer gateway than the council website could [Rochelle Edwards].

Whilst to date there has been only limited uptake of ICT within the democratic process within Waitakere City from Council's perspective, there are clear benefits for processing items like online submissions and this benefit extends to citizens who have access to such a system as well. Looking forward, John Johnson suggested that Council could use ICT

more in the consultation type processes and it depends on the different levels where there's local government, central government, referendum type concepts and you can have more participation from the whole electorate with different acts that your want to parcel or different things there [John Johnson].

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<sup>65</sup> In this context, prestige.

The shift in power that can be brought about by ICT is reflected in a change in the traditional role of council. Echoing Dan Randow's comment that

eDemocracy parallels other changes in attitudes [Dan Randow].

Mark Allen suggested that councils are not simply service providers but community organisations (this is reflected from a legislative perspective by the Local Government Act 2002). However, there is not a single commonly held view of council's role and so this is to some degree contestable. For Allen, this creates opportunities for local government involvement in ICT,

so I have no problem whatsoever if our local authority had said we are going to invest on behalf of the residents of Waitakere to make sure [broadband is] provided and we will collectively purchase it using the rates as the level of equity of contribution towards the services. To a degree council's doing that by making sure that black fibre is in place, but I don't think it's gone far enough and what you could do [Mark Allen].

This view is supported by research into the use of broadband amongst businesses in Waitakere, where a common theme was that Council has a role in ensuring a world-class infrastructure, either through lobbying network providers, working with government or by building their own networks (Williamson, 2006a).

As discussed in Chapter 5, the internet's ability to provide alternative spaces and low cost publishing is seen as a benefit by respondents to the survey, however, Allen observes that such qualitative discussion is not always welcomed or valued by council,

if you're just process oriented, who cares how clever [community activists] are; they're just getting in the way of making the job happen [Mark Allen].

The current process of submissions and public meetings is not necessarily seen as effective by council officers involved in consultation.

I've never really seen public meetings working because you just get people who are very positional there to beat up the other side... Public meetings, just in their nature, they attract grandstanders, not people who really want to have a thorough consideration of the issues, so I think we've got to find another way other than public meetings [Di Jennings].

Jennings recalled an Australian community consultation project where small group meetings were used and how this appeared to me more conducive to dialogue and open exchange. ICT can be useful in supporting this type of exchange but they must go beyond simply affecting the quantity of publication and extend information dissemination to reflect new processes of engagement that value diversity of opinion and discourse ahead of formulaic process.

I would give every councillor and community board as a whole a communications person whose role is to hold the databases of issues and communication to their key people who want to know about that issue [Mark Allen].

ICT extends the sphere of influence for councillors. Email in particular enables contact with constituents, colleagues and council officers in a way that was previously difficult.

It's quite quick, effective, and reasonably paperless transaction and that's hugely useful [Penny Hulse].

As both Di Jennings and Bevis England have observed, ICT does not replace face-to-face communication, which is often a catalyst for action, but they do allow for easier and more regular maintenance of relationships and

it just opens up opportunities of connecting with people that you just would never have [Di Jennings].

Instead of meetings fixed in time and space and conversations between two people, communication and conversation becomes a network which

will fundamentally change how we operate Government for the better [David Cunliffe].

However, Cunliffe noted that for this to happen there are issues of change management within government agencies, most notably

in terms of people resistant to change [David Cunliffe].

## **7.7.2 More involved in the decision-making process**

There is a potential to re-engage people in democratic processes through the use of ICT when they are used in a way that makes citizens feel closer to the decision-making process, as an enhancement of traditional democracy.

It's an enhanced form because of the immediacy, because of the depth of information that's possible and because of the multiple levels of communication that it makes possible [Bevis England].

Di Jennings commented above about the ineffectual nature of public meetings and the potential for small group meetings, which she felt could be further enhanced through ICT and Rochelle Edwards saw similar potential providing that issues of access and literacy are overcome to make the technology itself democratic.

I guess at the end of the day it's no different from other open forums but it's just getting that confidence and being confident that everybody can access a computer as well [Rochelle Edwards].

Where ICT was already being used to support community engagement, its value in successfully bringing people together was clear in that

we could not have progressed getting consensus and getting mandates from a broad range of community and government agencies without emailing [Mark Allen].

Allen listed the benefits to the Waitakere Wellbeing and Collaboration project as being

the ability to build consensus by sharing of information very, very quickly, but setting up electronic meetings, I mean the intensity of meetings that we had on that process would not have been possible without ICT [Mark Allen].

A secondary benefit in this process was transparency. Documents were made available online and were accessible to everyone involved in the project (the project primarily involved community groups, the majority of whom have access to ICT), highlighting the ability of ICT to get people closer to and more engaged in the decision-making process and to increase awareness of what was happening in the city. For Allen this represented a significantly higher level of engagement than he was used to through traditional methods of engagement. ICT, he felt, offered significant support for the project, reversing – or at least arresting – what Allen observed to be a decline in democratic participation. He does, however, sound a note of caution about expectations for eDemocracy, suggesting that it might be naïve to expect increased rates of active participation, rather that there might be

higher levels of awareness and more opportunity and choice [Mark Allen].

This utilisation of ICT within council process remains limited,

I suspect that we don't use [ICT] very much for consultation [Di Jennings].

The benefit of increasing the use online tools for engagement and consultation included the potential to change increase engagement within meetings,

online meetings are an underutilised aspect that could be utilised with some tools next to it... so that people are getting an ongoing share of where people lie in the group, of where they're at on the issues, whilst participating in a specific dialogue train of something that's going on [Mark Allen].

Asynchronous discussions provide a space for reflection and, as Penny Hulse noted, more purposive deliberation would be beneficial to the democratic process as it means

being able to step back from the heat of the argument and review the details and then discuss thoughtfully [Penny Hulse].

Proximity to decision-making it appears is about involvement in the process and access to information that informs or is an outcome from the process; it adds value to the democratic process but can be hard to achieve, particular where council remains process oriented.

Closeness to the decision-making process is aided by an ability to step back from the issue at hand and consider the available information before responding.

### **7.7.3 Access to information is improved**

The internet and new mobile technologies have reduced the distance between people and information, making information more available to more people and this is reflected in the way the application of ICT within local democratic processes is expressed.

I think democracy is a way of making fair and equitable decisions, so eDemocracy is a way of distributing information and providing a medium for interaction electronically [Rochelle Edwards].

For David Cunliffe,

electronic democracy... removes gaps, it speeds up cycles, it improves the richness and reach of information that's out there [David Cunliffe].



eDemocracy does this so without detracting from traditional representative democratic processes, rather ICT adds an extra dimension such that it

allows people to be better informed quicker. It probably allows them more channels to make their views heard as they feel appropriate. But of course the whole debate speeds up and broadens out so they may feel lost in it [David Cunliffe].

ICT provides the ability to find out what others are doing and to research what is happening locally or elsewhere. The internet is an important source of new knowledge and information

because suddenly they can have access to things which are new to them... If I had a question I'd probably look it up on the web [Bevis England].

The internet and email provide important benefits to local government as a distribution medium.

It's a way of duplicating that same message across a number of people and having that instant record, so it's convenient... For elected representatives, it just gets that message across faster and in a more convenient way [Rochelle Edwards].

For council staff, Edwards felt that it exposed them to more information than they would have available in purely hard copy format and that there were significant advantages for her in the dissemination of information and for communication. This is not to say that Waitakere City Council was a particular smart user of ICT within its own processes, indeed

our council could work a lot smarter in having all our minutes and agendas a lot easier to use [John Johnson].

Mark Allen suggested that information access rights need to be considered to ensure equity of access to information.

As a base line everybody should have the rights to have the information [Mark Allen].

Equitable access to information was considered important because

if the wider public had access to the information that some of the people who are really trying to participate in the process... I would feel that there was more empowerment and choice [Mark Allen].

Certainly those who were connected with council and community electronic networks report an increase in their awareness of what was happening and what resources were available.

I get about half a dozen things from WADCOSS<sup>66</sup> every day about what's happening, as well as the Aotearoa Ethnic Network [Di Jennings].

For Jennings such information dissemination practices were valuable because much of the information was new to her and she would not previously have had ways of finding out about it. The value lay not simply in getting new information out to people but also in getting information

out to a wide amount of community quite quickly and spread the word there's a problem in our community we need to deal with [Penny Hulse].

ICT speeds up dissemination of information through traditional media channels,

I mean if, if you've got a 24 hour news cycle, and you want to get information about an opponent into the public, and I don't do this, but if you were doing it by non-electronic means it would be too slow. It would miss the news cycle [David Cunliffe].

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<sup>66</sup> West Auckland District Council of Social Services, now known as Community Waitakere.

ICT creates new possibilities for dissemination of information ranging from email lists and community websites to online discussion forums and blogs, which in turn has an impact on political and democratic activities.

That capability has itself opened up possibilities that weren't there previously in terms of the interaction between the electronic medium and the broader news media, and therefore the broader political dynamics [David Cunliffe].

Issues become more visible more quickly and savvy politicians are as likely to track current affairs blogs as they are newspapers or television,

I scan daily Blogs. Not all of them, but I pick out a few that I really scan, that I kind of get some bearings off. Some of the probably more well-known ones. And that is one influence among many that helps me to make judgements about what issues I need to react to, how I'm being perceived [David Cunliffe].

Improved access to information has been useful for governments and was seen by Cunliffe as leading to a more deliberative form of democracy within a representative system.

I'm soon to launch a major discussion document about reforming the Immigration Act. That will be available electronically obviously as well as in hard copy form. And I hope that that will both speed up and broaden the range of opinions that we get. So that's at one level, it's kind of a basic level [David Cunliffe].

#### **7.7.4 Greater potential to engage other voices**

There is a risk, explored in Chapter 2 and in earlier analyses of the findings, that ICT simply enables existing hegemonies to be perpetuated. Rather than improving access to democracy, they re-enforce a political elite who have the access, skills and language to engage.

Conversely, participants identified situations where ICT can be used to engage voices on the margins who are not normally heard, whether this relates to an emergent community process, alternative perspectives, or – perhaps ironically – the middle ground in community,

who it was felt were often left out of debates. Consultation cannot be left to governments alone to control and 'effective consultation' requires a community-driven model of engagement as well as a political process that privileges deliberation. Parallels exist between traditional and electronic consultation however, the inequity of access and skills currently prevents equitable engagement.

I'm held back a bit because broadband take up is about 6-7% and... yeah... it's just not available for all, so not a way we can engage yet [Rochelle Edwards].

Participants noted that, just as the democratic process can often be the domain of an elite (Needham, 2004; Norris, 2004), face-to-face meetings within the community are often dominated by particular individuals and interests groups. The experience of a number of the participants (and of the researcher) was that such meetings are often polarised and therefore little opportunity arises for actual debate. Rather, what occurs is a re-stating of entrenched views and this flows over into other interactions between council and community.

The trouble is that council staff have to deal with single issue fanatics so much. It's like the police get desensitised and think everybody's a criminal because they deal with only criminals. Council staff have 90% of their time taken up with single issue fanatics all knocking on their door and hammering them for whatever [Mark Allen].

This is perhaps less well recognised within the wider community, who are less likely to be aware that such lobbying is

an incredibly political process [that impacts significantly] on the design of the consultation, and the principles of democracy to that level I don't think are as well understood and debated [Mark Allen].

The effect of such lobbying and polarised debate is to exclude the 'middle-ground' of communities from the debate, which David Cunliffe referred to as

the paradox of the political centre [David Cunliffe].

The paradox being that it is often this middle-group who are important to the resolution of an issue and remain potentially undecided, such that they can be persuaded by reasoned debate because

here are a group of people who on the one hand tend to be quite well informed but sometimes feel disempowered, who in the end do make the difference [David Cunliffe].

Engaging the middle-ground is therefore a key facet of enhanced democracy and Edwards saw that ICT could be beneficial in this situation,

would someone feel more able to contribute online because they felt safer doing it or they could actually get a word in? Yeah, definitely. I'm sure there'd be people who'd be happy to sit behind a computer and engage [Rochelle Edwards].

Both Edwards and John Johnson noted that less formal interfaces to council could be a useful way to engage people who would otherwise not deal directly with council,

I've never really felt a distrust of council as an individual, I just think I'd find WaitakereOnline a lot more fun to jump into and a lot more informal an environment to then coast around and discover the site [Rochelle Edwards].

The experience in UK local government, Carol Hayward suggested, is that online consultation appears to work best for more casual consultancy rather than more formal council-led processes. She cited the examples of the London Borough of Newham, which did not seem to have a very active or successful online process and which is tightly bound to council, and Brighton and Hove, where a more active discussion forum is run by the community without links to council. This supported John Johnson's assertion that

there are heaps of people out there who would maybe participate if there was something else and be more objective about it [John Johnson].

Civic portals or external websites, rather than council-run websites

could be used more in the consultation type processes... you can have more participation from the whole electorate with different activities that you want to parcel up [John Johnson].

Johnson felt that a less formal environment and the use of online debate might improve discussion and could at least make more people aware of the issues being discussed because

even if your political views are different you'd be looking at the actual item to be debated and you'd be looking at that more closely [John Johnson].

The benefits of connectedness through ICT that Mark Allen experienced in his role in the Waitakere Wellbeing and Collaboration project have already been discussed, however, it is worth noting again that the use of ICT to support this project was considered a success by council because it brought people together more quickly than face-to-face meetings and it led to the creation of strong bonds between project stakeholders, building

consensus by sharing of information very, very quickly [Mark Allen].

Allen saw wider public access to information having the potential to encourage people otherwise did not feel able to engage with local democratic processes. Although sceptical that more effective dissemination of information would of itself lead to more active participation, Allen, like Edwards, England and Cunliffe considered that it would lead to increased awareness in what is happening locally and that this would in-turn lead to more participation. However, caution was noted in that the providing the opportunity to participate more fully does not mean citizens will take up that opportunity, particularly where they feel others are already conveying their views sufficiently well.

It's almost like I feel I have the opportunity if I want to. I see and hear enough in the media of opportunities where people have taken up that opportunity; they've complained about this or whatever. I have faith that it will be responded to [Mark Allen].

David Cunliffe described eDemocracy as a tool for ensuring the people are better informed more quickly and this applies not only to citizens but also to civil servants and politicians. Such models 'level the playing field' and

allow the people making the decisions to be more informed; and allow those people, on whose behalf decisions are being made, to feel like they're being heard [David Cunliffe].

### 7.7.5 Role of partnerships

The role of partnerships emerged as significant in-part because government policy targeted funding under the Digital Strategy to projects that demonstrated a broad constituency and clearly identifiable partners. Partnerships were considered important for a variety of more operational reasons, not least so that knowledge is able to emerge and be captured from different locations and so that projects, once initiated have a better chance of becoming sustainable, a view that challenges some assumptions of council's role as a funder of community organisations.

I think they see it as council being the partner, so community might lead it. But I still struggle with the idea that council are the 100% funder and somebody says 'it's a success and it's got legs'. I don't think it does until it proves it can operate on its own, otherwise at the end of the day it's still a council facility, like a library or a community house [Rochelle Edwards].

The above comment does not pre-suppose that community (or other) contributions need to be monetary, in fact the reverse is true. The need for the appropriate recognition of voluntary and in-kind contributions was a vital motivational factor for community uptake. John Johnson also suggested that current thinking on grass-roots ICT-based projects can be

challenged, treating community-based initiatives as opportunities for job creation and skills acquisition that also return value to the community

because that's the only way, because otherwise after a while that person needs to learn and not a lot of them will be self sufficient... and that's how I see the local government can provide budgets for this type of thing [John Johnson].

Beyond communities, partnerships are required to ensure that infrastructure and strategic planning around ICT optimises the resources and skills available. Council has relationships with varying degrees of formality with a number of community and voluntary organisations,

the council's relationship to each of those is different, because the council's relationship to the NGOs through the collaboration project is actually quite strong, you know, and there are partnerships and there are [memorandums of understanding] and, you know, some of it's almost quite formalised, whereas the relationship between citizens is very much looser [Di Jennings].

One example of such a partnership around the use of ICT was the memorandum of understanding (MoU) between council and community ICT group, Work Raft Trust, which secured \$175,000 in government funding for the development of wireless broadband projects in parts of the city that lack access to broadband infrastructure. The success of this lies as much in the role of individuals involved in the project as in the perceived power of the two organisations and the risk of the project being sabotaged by other, less committed, parties still exists. The regional nature of Auckland also means that Waitakere City Council must work with the other city and district councils and with the regional council and central government to develop appropriate infrastructure because at that level is possible to

get appropriate funding and you make sure that infrastructure works, but then the local authorities should be responsible what hangs off the end of that, those computers and what needs to be happening within those communities to drive it [John Johnson].



Whilst there was some co-ordination of local and regional activities through the inter-council Broadband Liaison Group, this process has not always appeared to be entirely coherent.

A lot has just been left... well that's a government initiative, not a regional local authority [John Johnson].

More successful was the example of the Auckland region's libraries, who have integrated their ICT platforms and now provide a single library catalogue (however, this has not extended to or enhanced community ICT usage in any of the libraries beyond the current intra-city projects). For Mark Allen, partnerships required a more radical approach and a willingness on the part of council to consider

empowered exercises in how council blurs the edges of itself to allow others to participate in some of its processes [Mark Allen].

When such blurring occurs, Allen posits that it will create the potential to transfer some of the functions of council into the NGO sector because this allows for a more clear validation of council activities at a strategic level and because

more people are involved in it, it's an empowerment exercise, but in fact it's actually a sustainability exercise [Mark Allen].

## 7.8 Conclusion

This chapter has identified six specific categories that emerge from the research findings relating to awareness and capacity building and describing barriers that existed to prevent these from occurring. The six categories, shown in Figure 49 below, describe processes that are inherent in the emergence of a local eDemocracy process. Three of these, namely building awareness, promoting access and literacy, disrupting existing processes are active, macro-level tasks that members of the community must undertake with others in order to create new processes and engage citizens with ICT at a community level. Individuals and

organisations, including council, must re-assess how they function and engage as they become more aware of how ICT can contribute to and reshape community and democracy and the remaining three categories relate to these micro-level processes. Only then will individual perceptions of the value of ICT increase. Barriers exist where individuals and institutions hold entrenched positions, whether directly or indirectly related to ICT, and this creates drag, impeding the uptake and impact of ICT on the democratic landscape.

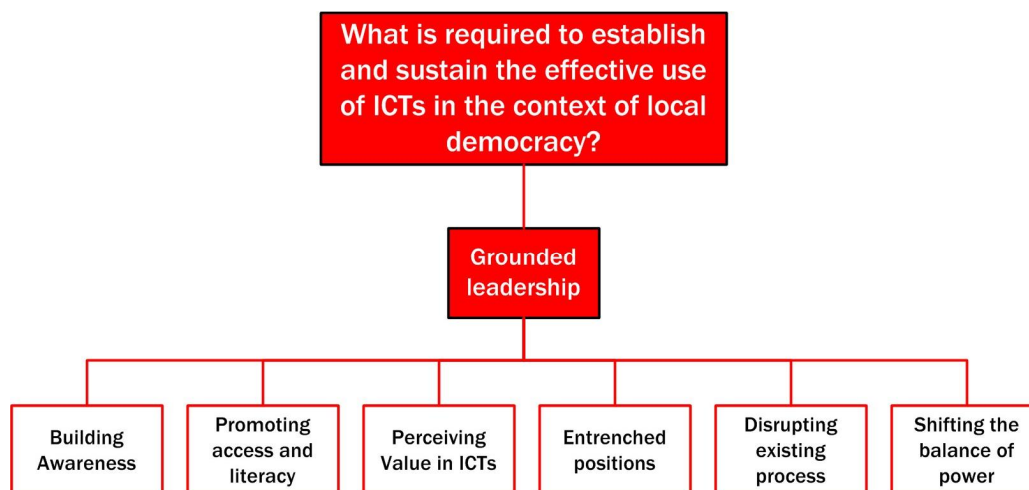


Figure 49: Emergent categories.

The findings suggest that as awareness and usage of ICT increases and the barriers are overcome, then perceived value increases and new processes begin to emerge. If these new processes are effective then they offer additional opportunities for those already engaged and new opportunities for those who are not engaged. The basic social process that connects all of the above is the need for 'grounded leadership'. Without grounded leadership none of the above processes are sustainable, some are unlikely to start and the speed of adoption is slowed or halted. Without the clear and strong leadership that is needed from both council and community, entrenched values become insurmountable and projects fail. 'Grounded leadership' is explored in detail the next chapter, along with the presentation of a framework to describe the processes and attributes of emergent citizen-focussed local eDemocracy, bringing together the foregoing discussion with the findings of the survey and the literature review.

# Chapter 8 – A Model for Emergent eDemocracy

## 8.1 Introduction

The literature review for this research (Chapter 2) supports the proposition that ICT has the potential to transform citizen's engagement with government. It suggests that an 'eDemocracy culture' can be developed amongst citizens and that this will lead to the emergence of new forms of community and civil society. It can be argued that local government, with its immediacy of connection to communities, is a logical starting point for such developments (Needham, 2004). The relatively low-cost and increasing availability of ICT and the trend projections for increasing cost-effective access in most developed countries means that communities are (and will be) increasingly able to publish their own stories and create online citizen-led initiatives to influence and interact with governments. However, such a proposition carries with it elitism since the process does not become truly democratic until the people-centred barriers to the ubiquitous and effective use of ICT have been overcome. The literature review articulated in this work supports the importance of situating ICT within a societal context. It also demonstrates a gap in the literature relating to participatory, community or 'grass-roots' agendas for change through the effective use of ICT in a way that citizens can become more actively engaged and better able to influence decision-making, particularly in a local government context. The literature review highlights the need for, and value of, research which explores the impact of ICT in facilitating and influencing increased and effective participation of citizens in the design, development and deployment of democratic processes, particularly where such research is itself grounded in a community and forms part of a community driven process.

This chapter draws together the two distinct phases of this mixed methods research. Firstly it summarises the findings from phase I, the survey, and then goes on to highlight the key the

key findings of the second phase. There follows a detailed discussion of the basic social process, an abstracted but emergent category within a GTM project that generates significant interest for the researcher and which is both frequently occurring and saturated with data (Creswell, 1998a). The findings of both phases are then brought together in order to develop a model that describes the emergence of eDemocracy in the context of this research.

The findings of the survey, discussed in Chapter 5, show that ICT is increasingly important in the community and voluntary sector in New Zealand. Communication technology provides support and resourcing to a wide range of civil society groups and key individuals within those groups. Although barriers to more effective use clearly exist, ICT is being used innovatively and successfully in this manner to communicate, research, resource, engage and promote the social appropriation of ICT for local benefit. The findings presented in Chapter 5 raise questions of how, where and through what media, citizens engage with each other and with government (both politicians and services). To summarise, the findings of Phase I are that:

1. ICT is an important tool in the community and voluntary sector in New Zealand. It provides support and resources to a wide range of individuals and civil society groups and they are being used innovatively and successfully to communicate, research, resource, engage and promote;
2. High levels of social capital and strong social connectedness are demonstrated both on- and off-line;
3. ICT plays an important role in facilitating community engagement within the civil society sector and between civil society and government agencies;
4. The level of computer and internet usage amongst the cohort is significantly higher than for the population as a whole, as is the level of internet usage when connecting with government;
5. Immediacy of access is a factor in determining effective use and a potential access-deficit exists for those who lack immediate access to ICT;
6. Time and cost of access are barriers to increased use and to the sustainability of CI initiatives;

7. Time is a barrier to increasing skills and knowledge;
8. There is a strong affirmation of the potential value of eDemocracy tools and the view that such tools include the delivery of government services as a core part of the democratic process; and
9. eDemocracy offers the potential to improve the quality of access and the quality of information that is available, in turn making the democratic process more available, accountable and transparent for citizens. Participation is a key theme to emerge, including timely and appropriate access to information and the opportunity for active involvement in the democratic process.

Building on the survey findings, interviews with key informants in Waitakere City highlighted a number of key processes and attributes that are required for eDemocracy practices to emerge within a local community (see the discussion in Chapter 7). The findings support the assertion in Chapter 2 that participation lies at the core of democracy and that local democracy retains a relative closeness to citizens (in comparison to central government). Although the transformative potential of ICT emerges from Phase II of this research, its potential to impact on democratic processes in a local community would seem to be problematic. The findings in this research suggest that it cannot be assumed that adoption of ICT and democratic transformation will occur in a way that privileges citizens above the technocratic and bureaucratic interventions of government. In point of fact it is clear from this work that this cannot be left to chance and that resistance within local government to greater citizen-led engagement is apparent.

As already discussed, Malina and Macintosh (2004) posit that citizens are disengaging from the democratic process because of a perceived loss of ownership. They argue for ICT's potential to arrest this decline, echoing Miller (1993), who argues that alternative and citizen-led fora are the key to a democratic renaissance. However, many in government perceive eDemocracy as a top-down tool (Riley, 2003) and this does little to arrest or reverse the democratic decline. Whilst ICT has the potential to widen participation in democracy, it all too often remains an attempt to streamline existing communication channels (Chen, Gibson & Geiselhart, 2006). The findings of this research support these conclusions in-so-far-as they

indicate that ICT can offer citizens a new way to engage with democratic process, thereby potentially halting a general decline in democratic participation but that barriers also clearly exist and that these barriers are in-part attitudinal. However, the research conducted here goes further, suggesting that for effective engagement to occur, a range of conditions must be created and that suitable actors must be present to enable existing processes to be disrupted and new transformative agendas created, supporting Riley's (2003) assertion that it is not sufficient to simply 'e-enable' existing processes. The six categories describing the processes and attributes of emergent eDemocracy described in Chapter 7 are:

- Building Awareness
- Promoting access and literacy
- Perceiving Value in ICT
- Entrenched Positions
- Disrupting existing process
- Shifting the balance of power

What is lacking from the literature reviewed is an attempt to define a catalyst or trigger factors necessary for the emergence of local eDemocracy. The categories described so far identify the processes and attributes of such but one further condition is identified in this research as being necessary.

The basic social process (BSP) is central to the GTM model and is derived from categories that generate significant interest for the researcher, are frequently occurring and saturated with data (Creswell, 1998a; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As part of the evaluation of a grounded theory, emphasis is given to the replication of the BSP in other situations, as such, a category that emerges from a theoretical base takes on a practical appearance, value and potential and is something that translates substantively into the real world (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In addition to the categories already identified and described, a further basic social process emerged from this research, namely 'grounded leadership' within communities and government and this described in detail in this chapter.

Citizen-focussed eDemocracy' was defined in Chapter 2 as:

A bottom-up, transformative process where citizens create and sustain vertical (subject-based) or horizontal (geographical) ICT-based solutions that accurately capture and reflect civic discourses that can influence government actions either directly or indirectly and where governments 'work with' rather than 'do to' citizens.

The research findings have confirmed the veracity of this definition and identified opportunities to create such models and barriers to achieving them. In order to explore potential solutions to creating citizen-centric local eDemocracy, this chapter begins with an explanation and discussion of the key attributes of 'grounded leadership'. It then presents a three-part framework drawing together the findings from the research and the literature review to describe a model for emergent eDemocracy:

1. An overarching model of emergent eDemocracy that describes the inter-related spheres of influence, process and transformation from a technical and social perspective is presented;
2. A model that is aimed at overcoming technology access, literacy and content deficits is defined after the technical attributes of local eDemocracy are considered; and
3. A socially-oriented model for democratic transformation and re-engagement is advanced for discussion.

## 8.2 Grounded Leadership

Further to the categories already discussed in Chapter 7, the basic social process identified in the participant interviews was that of 'grounded leadership', which is defined as a form of leadership that:

- is required to work effectively at a community level;
- is grounded in its stakeholder community in order to be able to encourage and engage people with ICT; and
- can effectively bridge and link different stakeholder groups.

Grounded leadership exhibits similar characteristics to the role Rogers (2003, p.27) describes as ‘opinion leaders’, who are members of a “social system in which they exert their influence.” However, it is noted earlier in this research that there are multiple, overlapping public spheres, or sphericules, operating in parallel and largely informally, corroborating Gitlin’s (1998) assertion that it is more appropriate to consider the concept of fragmented sphericules of public space and opinion. In addition, whilst grounded leadership can encompass aspects of Rogers’ ‘change agent’ role this is less formal and more akin to the way the term is used by Moyer (2003) to suggest someone leading change within a community setting. It is important to recognise that influence might only be exercised across a limited portion of the community. Figure 50 depicts a proposition that grounded eDemocracy leadership has four attributes:

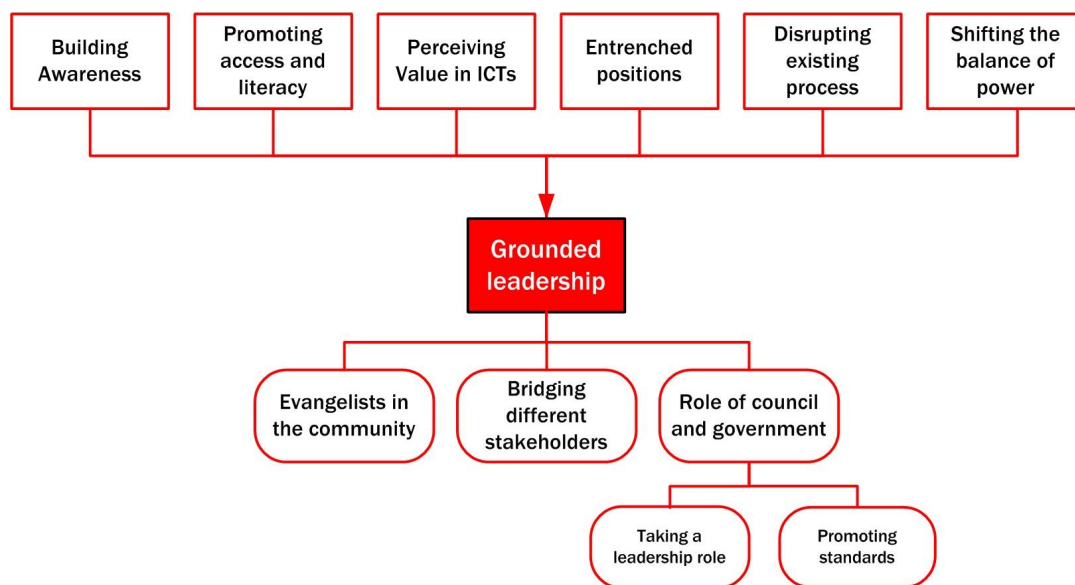


Figure 50: Grounded leadership.

The next section will describe these attributes of ‘grounded leadership’, which include:



1. Being an evangelist in the community.
2. Being able to bridge the needs and aspirations of different stakeholders.
3. Taking on a leadership and advocacy role within local government.
4. Promoting common standards.

### 8.2.1 Evangelists in the community

Civil society is an appropriate place for transformative action to promote new models of citizen-engagement in the democratic process as it “where collective actions are initiated to free social actors”, challenging the hegemonies of government and business (Touraine, 2000, p.97). Both Rogers (2003) and Moyer (2003) identify that individuals engage with change and transformation differently and at different speeds and that this is largely determined by personal motivation influenced by societal and other peer-pressures. Where change is societally-driven, as the findings here suggest local eDemocracy is, ‘early adopters’ must become advocates who are able to promote the benefits offered by the innovation to the wider community.

I think that there’s a job to be done for those who are advocates of eDemocracy to improve the public understanding of the broad definition as well as the narrow one. I don’t think that that’s stuck in the public mind [David Cunliffe].

Proximity to prior adopters matters. Di Jennings recalls the benefit of being able to call upon a member of the community with a high level of ICT skills. Such peer support increased her comfort with using ICT and this colleague’s knowledge and enthusiasm was a catalyst for her own growing interest in the potential of ICT. For Jennings, the personal connection was important because

sometimes it’s that personal relationship where you just need to be able to phone them and say, “Hey, what’s this about?” [Di Jennings].

There was recognition amongst the participants that certain individuals had promoted the importance of ICT and created more awareness within council, often via councillors. However, the key to leading significant and lasting change was the ability to effectively engage council officers since

we look at what's feasible and go back and give [politicians] our best possible advice and they'll make a decision based on the advice we give [Rochelle Edwards].

Failure to engage key Council staff clearly limits the scope and rate of development of eDemocracy initiatives. The Council in turn saw that it was beneficial for community activists to develop local initiatives and to promote the 'big picture'. This was a convenience since Council had neither the skills nor the resource to be active in this area. Regardless of the level that activists were operating at, clarity and simplicity were considered of primary importance when delivering the message. Failure to convey the benefits in simple language alienated people from ICT as

ICT is complicated and can be confusing, so it needs to be explained simply [Penny Hulse].

There's a handful of advocates who are really working hard to advocate from a community perspective... what I really like about the way that you do it, and I think Peter to some extent was the same, is that there's absolute clarity [Di Jennings].

Jennings and others noted that the issue was primarily about good communication, not ICT *per se*. Some community people were perceived as making ICT appear to be too complicated and focussed on the detail to the extent they failed to succeed in engaging with non-technical people in a way that assisted them to overcome their barriers. Indeed, certain individuals were clearly identified by a number of participants as negatively impacting on the uptake of ICT for this very reason. Bob Harvey suggested that timing was important, recalling his early interest in ICT coinciding with his first contact with community activists in this area,

I was excited when Bevis came... [he] walked into the Annual Plan process, and I became absolutely committed to Bevis. I thought that he stood for the wonder of, if you like, communication and technology, so one person made the difference to me [Bob Harvey].

At this point, Mayor Harvey became passionate about what ICT could do for the city and he continued to drive much of the city's strategic vision around ICT.

In other words, if you could look for something, buy something, talk to somebody, buy, sell, be part of, it was a way to bring our kids and our families into the 21st century, which hadn't happened yet. So this is what I did, like a single-handed crusade [Bob Harvey].

The research indicates that the leadership role could be driven by organisations as well as individuals. In this case a part of council, the city's libraries, played an important role in promoting ICT at the grass roots level within local communities. The city had six Learning Centres, which were managed by the libraries but only four of these were located within an actual library (two were standalone centres). Whilst staff within the library system had been pro-active in promoting ICT literacy, this was not necessarily well known in the community.

Libraries need to be perceived as places where technology can be accessed, not just books. So, it's changing the whole view of the way council services are provided [Rochelle Edwards].

John Johnson suggested that local government could only achieve a limited amount of awareness-building itself, because it lacked the resources and it was not always the appropriate vehicle for this activity. He suggested that a 'technology champion' model could be used more effectively and that council should support such a role. Such a suggestion aligns well with CI's implicit shift away from acceptance of an essentialising technocratic top-down approach, recognising that solutions emerge from within communities themselves (Marshall & Taylor, 2004; Schuler & Day, 2004). Opportunities also exist for community advocates to champion ICT within council and to monitor resistance to new technology. As Mark Allen sees it, there was potential for sharing and support within groups,

that Peter Senge-type thinking and stuff, but the difficulty of that is the cost of time, the infrastructure costs are just so high, perceived so high to get to that format [Mark Allen].

## 8.2.2 Bridge different stakeholders

The previous section has identified the importance of effective leadership, however, it posits that community advocates can be problematic if unable to communicate the benefits and potential of ICT (and eDemocracy) to others, particularly to those in key decision-making and thought-leadership roles within Council and the community. Strong social capital, such as was evident in the research findings, is an enabler of democracy (Cox, 2002; Norris, 2002; Putnam, 2000) and grounded leadership acts horizontally as well as vertically, both bridging different groups and stakeholders as well as linking them with those in positions of authority.

Political sophistication increases where social capital is strong and civil society and democratic engagement are enhanced (Tavits, 2006), thus fostering more participatory forms of government and higher levels of involvement and inter-sectoral partnership. Through such relationships, expertise in one group can be shared with others and the results of this occurring are evident in the research findings. Fora existed in the city for this informal matrix-management approach to occur, including the EcoTech Advisory Group, the WaitakereOnline Editorial Board and the Infotech Call to Action<sup>67</sup>. The role of key stakeholders was seen as crucial for promoting the uptake and effective use of ICT and, as a result, it was considered that council could potentially play a role in supporting this, namely that

you've got to try and identify some stakeholders like that in the community with our people and get them to drive a lot of that [John Johnson].

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<sup>67</sup> Part of the inter-sectoral Waitakere Wellbeing and Collaboration Project.

Social capital is embodied in the key relationships that exist between individuals or organisations in the community and this in turn affects participation (Coleman, 1988; Putnam 2000). The bridging of stakeholders evident in the research could help to resolve issues of equitable participation and assist with defining who, if anyone, controlled a particular process since

management of the process can open or close discussion [Dan Randow].

Carol Hayward noted that, in Bristol<sup>68</sup>, traditional public meetings seemed unpopular, often only attracting a small number of people whereas online fora seemed to be drawing the interest of more people

so they appear to be connecting and engaging people more successfully [Carol Hayward].

It was suggested that existing projects could be used to demonstrate the benefits to others and to test out new ideas,

you can do pilots in certain regions or areas [John Johnson].

At a more strategic level, bridging and linking between stakeholders becomes vital to sustainability. A commonly recurring issue with CI initiatives is that key initiators are not seen to be the right people to operationalise a project (B. Craig & Williamson, 2005a; Day, 2004b; Williamson, 2003), leading to project failure as these people moved on to new ideas and projects. Hence, bridging different stakeholder groups potentially allows these matters of continuity and operationalisation to be overcome by better resourcing the operational side of community groups or through the identification of key people who community groups can call upon for support. In New Zealand at least, such partnerships are a pre-requisite to

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<sup>68</sup> Discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

funding under the Digital Strategy in both the Broadband Challenge Fund and the Community Partnerships Fund (New Zealand Government, 2005).

### 8.2.3 Role of local government

As well as leadership emerging from community stakeholders active in CI initiatives, the size, role and resourcing available to council makes the leadership role pivotal in developing new forms of democratic engagement (Needham, 2004; Wright, 2006). At the time this research occurred, Waitakere City Council had not adopted any tangible eDemocracy programmes and used ICT in limited ways for consultation or community engagement<sup>69</sup>. In this regard, Waitakere was not unique in New Zealand but at the time it was considered to be a leader in the way it worked with its community (D. Craig & Lerner, 2002). Waitakere's experience in traditional consultation and partnership suggests that the potential exists for Waitakere City to take a regional and national leadership role in adoption of eDemocracy and online engagement, even though traditional council process was identified as a barrier to this.

I guess civil servants are just inherently conservative and will look at a big picture idea and say, look how can we deliver a piece of this and make it happen. You know, we're scared to think too big, that's the role of the politician [Rochelle Edwards].

This inherent conservatism was identified as leading to missed opportunities, as the embedded focus was on current process not improving outcomes,

the barrier though is that councils have relied on formalised processes like submission processes, community meetings, posters, publications in the Waitakere City News as being consultation and democracy. They're critiquing the effectiveness of those... but not necessarily seeing ICT as the solution [Mark Allen].

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<sup>69</sup> In effect, this is limited to web-based submissions for projects being consulted upon and the electronic download of documents (although these are poorly optimised and can often require users to download complete sets of agenda papers simply to access one small part of the document).

Despite an historical lack of vision for ICT's potential, there was some evidence that momentum was beginning to build in this area and that there was increased recognition of ICT value within council,

I think the momentum's coming through because I think if you looked at it through the [WaitakereOnline] editorial board and the old forums, you had that advisory group and that, it was seen as important, but it wasn't as a key strategic platform. And other factors are now coming through which are uplifting the whole visibility [John Johnson].

As this comment implies, council's view of ICT remained fragmented and 'siloed' within vertical Council structures. Such a position was also seen to be pre-disposed to internal grabs for power, 'empire building' and ineffectiveness, which caused delays and frustrations for community partners.

The [project] despite being community led and initiated has been hijacked by a council silo with no idea about what they're doing, is useless at consultation and arrogantly presses ahead as if it knows best – which it clearly doesn't if the clamour from the community partners is anything to go by [Researcher's diary].

The findings suggest that ICT is not systemically viewed as a strategic platform but rather it is seen as a delivery tool or subset for other platforms, including infrastructure, education or democracy services, something that was alluded to in Chapter 2 and which can result in an operational focus where ICT projects are perceived as

quite resource hungry and it takes a different kind of thinking upfront and a process of mandating those approaches that requires quite a strong different way of thinking [Mark Allen].

This 'different way of thinking', Allen suggested, needs to come from both politicians and council officers as well as from the community. He suggested that the public's expectation of council's role and methods of engagement must also change if the use of ICT was to become

more prevalent in democratic processes. As noted in Chapter 2, a more strategic approach is required and care taken not to ignore the tactical level. Bob Harvey suggested that whilst council would champion a new idea around ICT it never quite delivered because others within the organisation did not see the benefit. Support was eventually withdrawn or the project hampered and delayed to the point of it becoming untenable. Mayor Harvey suggested that fear of the new played a part in this but that it needed to be overcome if the city was to advance. A collaborative approach with leadership from outside as well as from within council was needed

because aren't we all an environment city? Well, of course we are. Aren't we an eco-city? Of course we are. I think this is the very framework of how you build a city for the 21<sup>st</sup> century [Bob Harvey].

### **8.2.3.1 Taking a leadership role**

Realistically, if new models of democratic engagement are to emerge, local government will play an important role in supporting them. Whilst some local governments might currently resist the use of ICT in increasing citizen participation, the drive for power and influence within the councils and with voters indicate that local government (and implicitly all levels of government) will have to include these new ICT-enabled processes in the emerging mix of communications channels.

If we are wedded to utilising IT to enhance the democratic process the role of making that happen is going to be those who stand to gain the most from it [Bevis England].

England suggested that there were obvious benefits for such champions as well as for government because

a government that wants to have a responsive electorate and wants to know what's going on, ought to be doing an awful lot more to support the development of eDemocracy tools [Bevis England].



England pointed to examples of greater public access to democratic processes that had been developed and that

in some areas [there is] a very strong interest, in enhancing the democratic process in a number of ways... televising Parliament is one example, or live radio broadcasts. They're prepared to go that far. Will they then go the next stage of having entire sittings available through the web [Bevis England]?

However, it should be noted that these were primarily passive processes and at the time there were few examples exist of active, participatory projects. Even this passive level of development was not yet occurring in Waitakere and this is re-enforced by perceptions described in Chapter 7 that the level of recognition of eDemocracy was low,

I don't hear them pushing information technology stuff. I don't hear anybody in there being a champion for it that I know of [Di Jennings].

Jennings felt that this situation could quickly change if a councillor started to actively champion the use of ICT. Community groups had already started to promote it

but, the reality often is that the community doesn't have the funds to make it happen, so council are the funding source [Rochelle Edwards].

It was suggested that one route to capacity building – and hopefully to sustainability – was for council to take a leadership role by facilitating the uptake of ICT and funding community-based agents.

[Council can] actually physically facilitate it and drive it and get up the interest and get the people in actually becoming some of those champions in a way and those people don't have to actually be long serving council people; They can be people in the community and get paid for that, for their time and it becomes a bit of a career for them in a way [John Johnson].

Importantly this role goes beyond funding and extends to the facilitation of the local projects. As Johnson, Edwards and others noted, the local Council, was the ideal vehicle for this because of its size, reach and the resources it had available to it. Edwards saw a role for both council and community to develop ICT-based solutions. However as already noted, there were issues of ownership, sustainability and funding that needed to be overcome. Council itself was seen to have a leadership role in promoting the potential of ICT. On one side, this role incorporated promoting the benefits of access,

part of the Digital City Strategy is that we have to start promoting the benefits of access and the benefits of always on fast access rather than simply the dial-up connection [Rochelle Edwards].

A secondary role for council was seen as ensuring that everyone who wanted access to ICT could get it within their community, if not at home.

We need to promote the learning centres for people that don't have any access at all. So that they know they can get to something in their community and libraries need to be perceived as places where technology can be accessed, not just books [Rochelle Edwards].

In effect, this required a new approach to council service delivery and relationships with community

changing the whole view of the way council services are provided [Rochelle Edwards].

Johnson agreed noting that

within local government one of our things is through the library structure and the learning centre's part of the thing there, working with communities [John Johnson]

However, this was not currently happening,

[Council] needs to do more of that and I think that is where their role is, but I do believe they also have a role to make sure that the communities in those areas get the wherewithal, whether it's through a learning centre or through a school to get the right education and training to use [ICT] [John Johnson].

Norris (2002) pointed to new forms of democratic engagement, which parallel developments online. Such blurring of boundaries between council and community was a familiar concept in Waitakere, where joint community and council initiatives included community ICT (for example, the Digital City Strategy and WaitakereOnline Portal) and, more broadly, the Waitakere Wellbeing and Collaboration Project.

Which is one of the reasons why you know I'm really involved and there's kind of empowered exercises in how council blurs the edges of itself to allow others to participate in some of its processes [Mark Allan].

Bob Harvey felt that the ideas were there and the big picture work had been done, citing the Digital City Strategy. But from council's point of view, the challenge was then to speed up the process and increase city-wide engagement with ICT. He believed that for this to happen, council needed act as a leader and that it needed to

take it into our communities [Bob Harvey].

Council-leadership as a catalyst for eDemocracy was demonstrated by Bristol City, which had been setting the UK-national agenda for eParticipation. As Carol Hayward noted, leadership occurred not because of any one unique characteristic of Bristol, rather it was because the timing was right and that

support of elected councillors was in part at least a key to their success [Carol Hayward].

Hayward highlighted how one elected councillor was able to use the new online participation models to highlight the importance of recycling in Bristol, despite an initial lack of support from her political colleagues and council officers,

the recycling petition was initiated by a councillor after hearing comments from the community. Both party and council officers were obstructive and discouraging until the petition gained significant public interest – eventually it had 5000 responses. By this time the council department had already started investigating options, having previously said it wasn't affordable or doable [Carol Hayward].

Interestingly, the high response was in part due to community networks making extensive use of email to circulate information on and awareness of the ePetition. Hayward and Randow suggested that this happened because the primary community of interest in this issue was largely online and was already ICT literate (White, 1999). These findings suggest that caution is needed not to simply engage with an already motivated 'online elite' but rather to facilitate the uptake of ICT and, at the same time, widely promote the value of democratic engagement.

### **8.2.3.2 Promoting standards**

Whilst leadership for promotion, adoption and advocacy could be shared between council and community (and others), promoting the development of the necessary infrastructure for an increasingly vital and fast internet connectivity must happen at a local and central government level. Community could assist with this locally. However, community generally lacked the scale and resources to be successful on its own. Whilst other issues of good practice were also important, broadband infrastructure was the most topical issue. Local government could play a part in ensuring that national standards were developed to promote and encourage the deployment of network infrastructure.

What we are really pushing to [the Ministry of Economic Development] is that the focus shouldn't just be on the MUSH<sup>70</sup>/urban issue but also dealing with the remote areas that don't have broadband [Rochelle Edwards].

However, the challenge – particularly in the more rural parts of Waitakere City – was to balance the provision of broadband-capable infrastructure with the protection of local amenity,

the submissions I get from the West Coast communities to the Annual Plan are 'do what you can to give us broadband and we want to be connected tomorrow but you've got to do it in a way that doesn't affect the amenity of the city', well... how do you respond to that? [Rochelle Edwards].

Council was seen to have a role of working with the telecommunication network providers to develop standards of practice around ducting and capacity, as well as to try and facilitate the extension of existing networks and provision of new networks into areas that were currently unable to access broadband.

What we want to do is work with the telcos and have them say 'this is the absolute maximum we need to deliver what you want' and we'll stick with that and work with them. So, that would be a permitted activity under our District Plan so you wouldn't need a Resource Consent, but we don't have the dimensions [Rochelle Edwards].

The Local Government Act 2002 provided the basis for council to work in the best economic, social and cultural interests of its residents. John Johnson saw network infrastructure as

now that extension there, to my way of thinking, should've been the responsibility of the local authorities to drive that and get the tail end of the infrastructure up and working to the community's benefit [John Johnson].

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<sup>70</sup> MUSH = Metropolitan, University, Schools and Hospitals. Term used to define key anchor tenants for urban fibre networks.

Should it so choose, council could take a strategic view of network infrastructure unhindered by commercial imperatives. However, council's inherent aversion to risk and its often cumbersome processes had clearly hindered this being done quickly or efficiently.

## 8.2.4 Summary

Responses to the survey suggest that the attributes of eDemocracy ground it in the local community. Where eGovernment is delivered from the centre out, eDemocracy initiatives take place at the community level. Indeed, whilst consultation could occur at any level, the process was only considered to be 'eDemocracy' when it

focuses more on community, and the active involvement of community [S73].

Two themes discussed in Chapter 5 relate to engagement and participation in the processes of government, including access to the decision-making processes. Respondents alluded to the potential for expanding the extent of consultation, for networking both within existing social and community networks and beyond, for example:

Developing new groups or improving existing groups to enable them to lobby government more effectively. Developing networks between lobby groups with similar aims nationwide and internationally to work together more effectively [S34].

eDemocracy was seen as a way of breaking down barriers to participation in the democratic process by connecting citizens to decision-makers more effectively and efficiently. But it also offered the potential to hold elected officials and particularly bureaucrats more accountable for their actions and potentially negated the well-documented technocratic shift in government described (Mälkiä, Anttiroiko, & Savolainen, 2004). It is

the chance to restructure the roles and relationships between the elected representatives, the bureaucracy and citizens [S137].

On the downside, access to ICT and the information they carry was not evenly distributed or ubiquitous and those without access became further marginalised as models of eDemocracy emerged because

membership of the demos is restricted to those with money to ensure access, technical skills, time to search for information, and the belief that they are valued by a society [S26].

The role of grounded leadership emerged as being critical to the establishment and success of citizen-centred eDemocracy. It was not sufficient that this occurred only in the community, although this is vital, it was also required to happen within local government. Local actors were required and these needed to be able to motivate, engage and lead both sides – community and government – and to work together to bridge the needs of different stakeholder groups effectively. These findings highlight a proposition that emergent eDemocracy is temporal, with a number of key stages, during which actors (and particularly process leaders) are required to adopt different roles. As awareness of new methods of participation increases the rates of adoption increase and eventually such processes can themselves become established. These roles and processes are described below.

### 8.3 Emergent eDemocracy

The findings suggest that to become engaged in the democratic process citizens must first value the core tenets of an active democracy and be motivated to pursue a democratic agenda,

the next question is whether they wish to avail themselves of that information and then avail themselves of the debating and dialogue areas to crystallise themselves in relation to that issue [Mark Allen].

ICT was seen as a way of lowering the barriers to engagement and the findings show that respondents viewed eDemocracy as being centred on the needs of citizens, rather than

government. The conditions required for this to occur were explored in detail amongst the interview participants. The findings suggest that, for conditions conducive to eDemocracy to emerge, the focus must be on the benefits to people and not on the technological aspects. Generating awareness, and subsequently trust, required a simple message that keeps ICT and eDemocracy in perspective because

ICT is complicated and can be confusing, so it needs to be explained simply [Penny Hulse]

As discussed in Chapter 7, there remained a lack of widespread understanding of how ICT could affect democratic interactions and that

there's a job to be done for those who are advocates of eDemocracy to improve the public understanding of the broad definition [David Cunliffe].

The findings suggest that to create effective grass-roots eDemocracy, seven attributes need to be considered. These attributes can be grouped into technical, social and transformational categories and are described below.

### 8.3.1 Technical sphere

The technical sphere relates to the application of information communication technology itself; the processes that govern the use of that technology and the solutions that technology supports and, potentially, enhances:

- **ICT** itself, its effective use and adoption and issues relating to ICT uptake, including inequity and barriers to adoption;
- **Process**, or what has to happen to transform, change and support processes; who is responsible for this, and ;what barriers or resistance exist; and
- **Solutions** (projects and initiatives) that link technology to process but also recognise, at the strategic level, the importance of sustainability and scalability.



### 8.3.2 Social sphere

The 'social sphere' refers to the human side of eDemocracy; building awareness of what ICT can do, promoting deliberative models and the technology to make them accessible and the role of community and government in achieving this:

- **Awareness** of ICT and what they can do;
- **Deliberation** and the process of more effective civic engagement in democratic practices and barriers to that which exist; and
- **Grounded leadership** comes from those who are aware of the potential and can promote new ideas, advocating and leading change. Conversely, such 'leaders' can inhibit uptake by failing to communicate effectively or by maintaining the status quo. As one participant in this research observed:

There's a handful of advocates who are really working hard to advocate from a community perspective [and] there's absolute clarity... this is not about ICT, this is about better communication [Di Jennings].

### 8.3.3 Transformative praxis

Change is a socially driven phenomenon which, in the case of eDemocracy, occurs through the alignment of technology adoption with social processes. The key transformative attribute of emergent eDemocracy is that of **disruption**, which refers to the disruption of current processes and power structures leading to opportunities for new processes and solutions enabled by ICT to emerge. Transformative praxis is the link between the social and the technical and provides the space for a reclaiming of [social] power in order to implement new [technical] systems.

The significance of these attributes is that changes (new or modified strategies, processes, systems) occur in the *technical* sphere through a *transformative* process that originates in the ideas and actions taking place in the *social* sphere (through awareness-building and advocacy). The *social* sphere is linked to the *technical* sphere through *transformative praxis*.

These attributes and their inter-relationships are represented diagrammatically in Figure 51 below and can be described as follows:

- **Grounded leadership**
  - Promotes **awareness** of the potential for democratic change;
  - Advocates for and causes **disruption** to **transform existing processes**;
  - Designs and manages the implementation and delivery of new **processes**.
- Building **Awareness** amongst citizens
  - Increases **participation** in **deliberative** fora;
  - Promotes and access to and the use [adoption] of **ICT**;
- **ICT** supports
  - The delivery of **systems** that instantiate new **transformative** processes.
- New **processes** and **systems** enable
  - The emergence of new models for **deliberative engagement**.

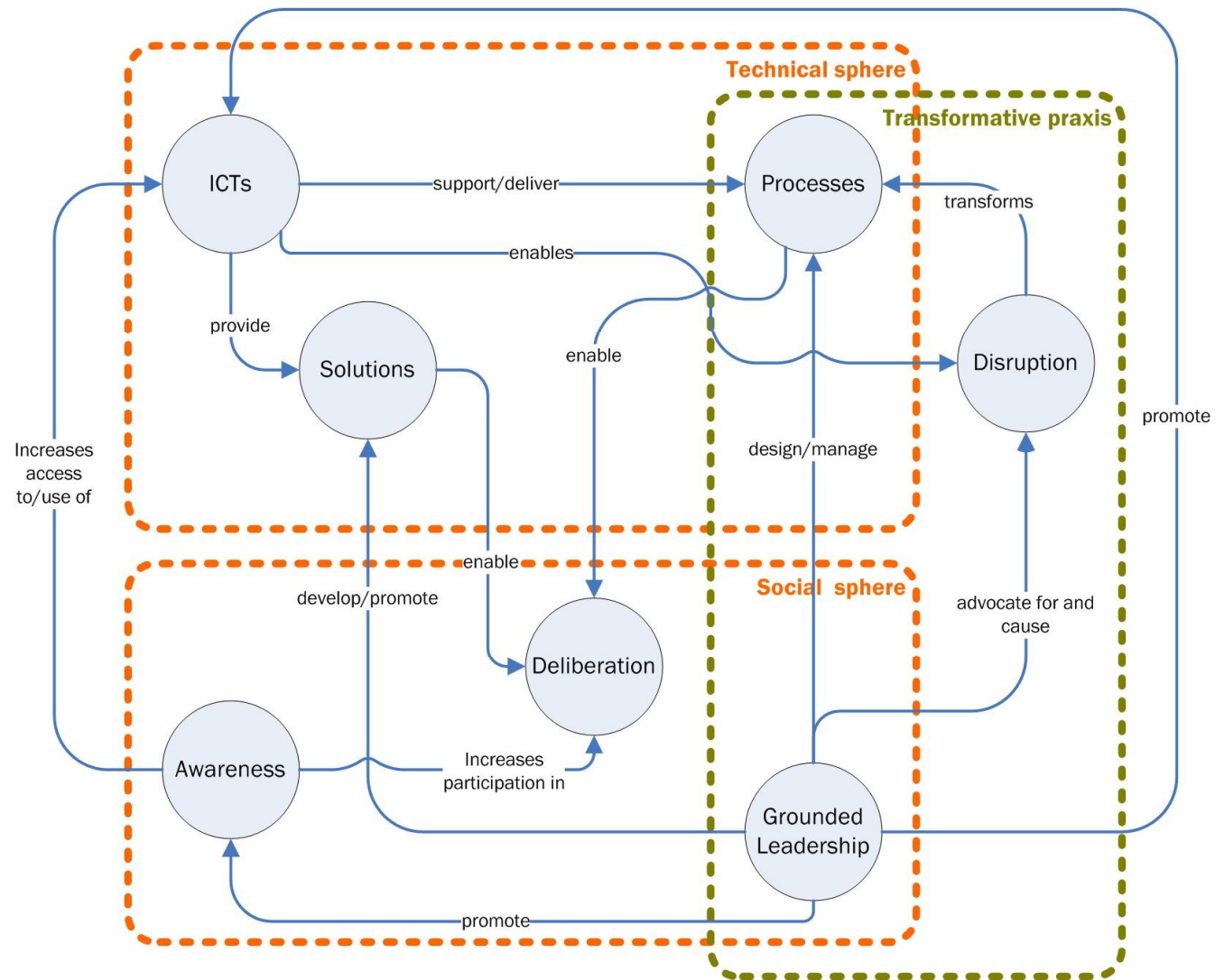


Figure 51: Attributes of emergent grass-roots eDemocracy.

## 8.4 Operationalising eDemocracy Within a Community

The model depicted in Figure 51 shows the inter-relationship of the attributes that enable new processes to emerge. It proffers a strategic overview of an emergent approach to eDemocracy. However, before this can be realised (or operationalized), a tactical approach as to how such a framework could be delivered is required. In the next two sections, two models are presented. These will, first, operationalise the technical sphere described above and, second, present a model to realise the necessary changes in the social sphere, that are led through transformative praxis.

The findings suggest that a framework that can be used to facilitate the adoption and effective use of ICT within communities is needed. Such a model is focussed on the technical sphere. The provision of technology, solutions to use that technology and processes that are enabled (or transformed) by it are important pre-cursors to effective use (Gurstein, 2003), which is itself a pre-cursor to effective engagement.

The findings highlight significant barriers to adoption and the potential to perpetuate existing hegemonies and power-elites online. Such barriers to ubiquity must be addressed and these can be technical, economic, cultural, social or political. It is also apparent from the above findings that ICT is primarily a communications tool and a source of information; it is a means to an end and not an end in itself.

ICT proves valuable when they are harnessed (like other media) for communicating a message. However they also extend the traditional concepts of media into an interactive experience where the views of many can be expressed and potentially, disseminated widely. It is this potential that sets ICT apart from traditional print and electronic media and which offers great potential for citizens to become more involved in the political and democratic processes. As Habermas (2006) observes, the internet has fragmented and decentralised the

context in which communication occurs such that 'experts' must compete with unedited egalitarian sources of information.

The need for a framework is further confirmed by a mis-match between strategy or policy and operational initiatives that were identified in Chapter 2 and subsequently confirmed in the findings of the interviews in phase II of this research. Policy, and those charged with executing it, were consistently seen to be out of touch with what was happening in the community and further, both were perceived as unfamiliar with ICT,

unfortunately the leadership in the councils [don't] actually recognise the mega-leap that would happen in the way the City would function as a consequence of [ICT adoption] [Mark Allan].

A framework is needed that can bridge the more strategic and tactical examples alluded to above with actual community based-initiatives. The model shown in Figure 52 below demonstrates an alignment with the citizen-centric eGovernance framework (shown in Figure 6) and depicts a model that aims to achieve sustainable community-based ICT solutions. Just as Day (2004b) grounded his framework in the 3Ps of Community ICT<sup>71</sup>, the model below can be related to the findings presented thus far in this research:

1. Access and literacy are societal issues so must be addressed at a macro or policy level.
2. Partnerships allow active communities to work together in either formal or informal ways.
3. Partnerships can be used to realise economies of scale, bring on board funding or to provide specialist skills or training that would otherwise not be available to the community.
4. Within a community, projects require visionaries to lead the practice-side of a project and skills development initiatives to ensure that, once projects become established and operationalized, localised resource and sufficient momentum exists to sustain them.

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<sup>71</sup> Policy, partnerships and practice.

This temporal model identifies five stages of maturity for the use of ICT within communities and can be used as both an assessment tool (for current maturity) and as a planning or policy development tool. Each of the five stages, shown in Figure 52 below, recognises an increasing maturity and sophistication in ICT usage. However, the model should not be seen as linear. The target is not to reach stage five, rather that technology is being applied in a way that is seen as appropriate to the community in question at a point in time (either present or future).

These five-stages can be related to the three enablers in the Digital Strategy (New Zealand Government, 2005), as shown in Table 37:

Table 37: Mapping temporal framework to Digital Strategy enablers.

Temporal stages	Digital Strategy Enablers
Access	Connection
Literacy	Confidence
Content	Content
Creation	
Dissemination	

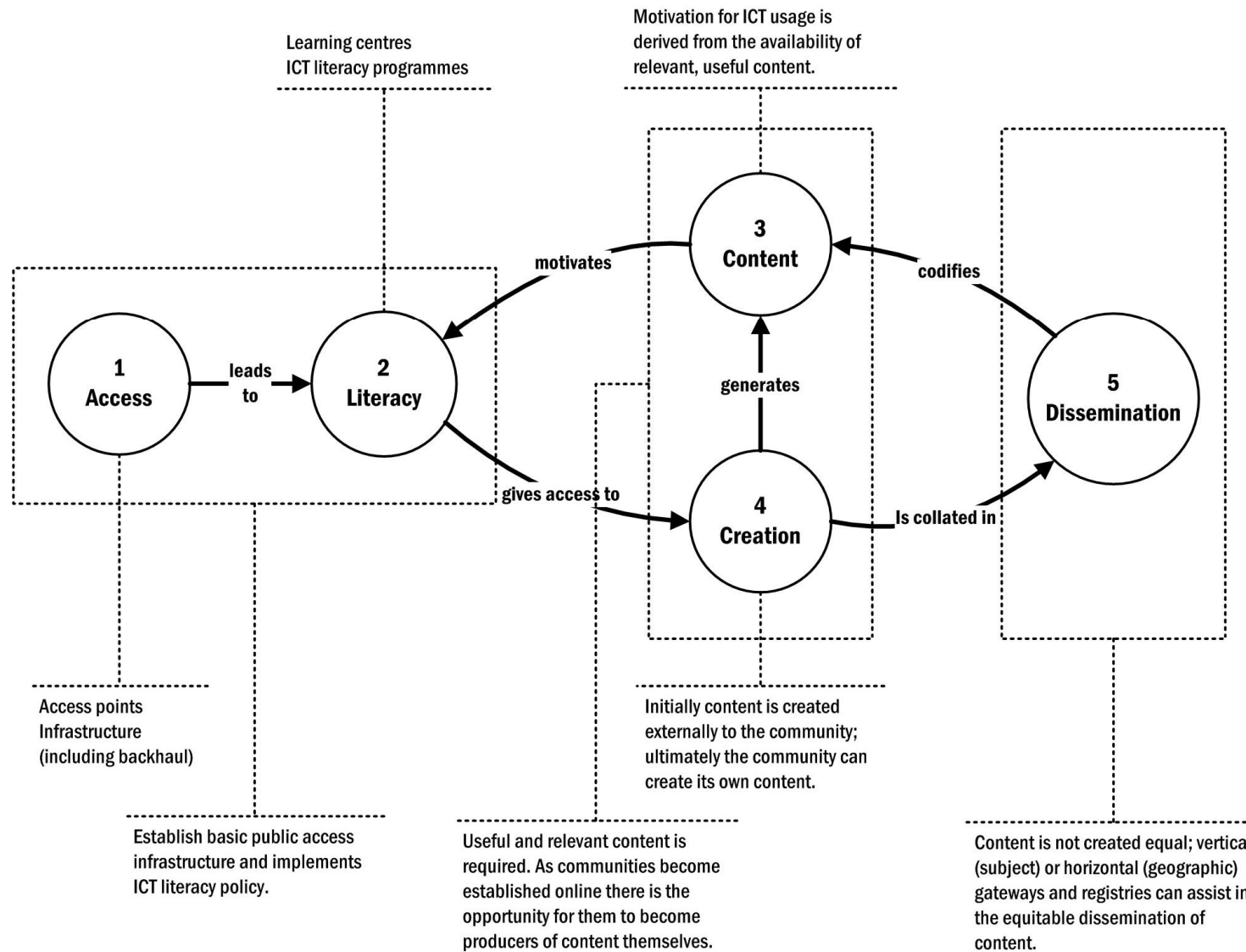


Figure 52: Temporal framework for the uptake of community ICT.

Stages 1 through to 4 occur within communities. They are not necessarily formal and are not entirely dependent on each other. The requirements and relative importance (or even existence) of a stage is related to the maturity of ICT usage. In other words, each of the four Stages, whilst to some degree reliant on its predecessor, does not require that prior stages are or were formalised or even articulated (there is likely to be a continuum between a *laissez-faire* approach and formal strategy or policy initiatives):

**Stage 1 – Access**

It is not lack of access which causes the digital divide but the consequences of that lack of connection (Castells, 2001). Hence strategies are required to ensure equity of access and opportunity. Citizens must have basic access to ICT. This could be through private ownership, community ownership or privately owned access points. Stage 1 can be sub-classified based on the nature, cost and availability of access.

**Stage 2 – Literacy**

It is not enough to provide community-based ICT resources. It is imperative that those in the community whom this technology is intended to benefit are trained to make effective use of it. As the generation of knowledge supersedes physical production in the post-industrial age, literacy can be judged at two levels: that of basic literacy and literacy in ICT.

Stages 1 and 2 are not necessarily formal. If access and literacy are already present, or if no policy or strategy addresses them, they could be ad-hoc. However, this requires individual motivation. Whilst Compaine (2001) argues that any digital divide will ultimately be resolved by market forces, these findings support the view that policy intervention is required because of the societal transformation brought about by access to information (and the related disadvantage of not having access) (Castells, 2000; Chadwick, 2006).

**Stage 3 – Content**

For ICT to be useful and for communities to be motivated to use them, material and services must be available online that are of a



perceived value to the community. Communities must be aware of such information and services and have access to them.

#### **Stage 4 – Creation**

Communities have the knowledge, skills and facilities necessary to produce and publish information themselves and to re-package or highlight information that is directly pertinent to them. Logically, Stage 4 must have occurred elsewhere to provide usable and useful material for communities entering Stage 3.

#### **Stage 5 – Dissemination**

The final Stage, is a meta-stage, occurring on or beyond individual community boundaries. As communities become publishers of new knowledge, society risks becoming overwhelmed with information. At present some information is more readily available and accessible than others; because the producer is more widely known or because of search engine bias. In a truly participative CI model, processes need to exist to ensure the fair and equitable dissemination of information (that is being received at Stage 3 and created at Stage 4). Examples of such models include portals and would involve meta-data, meta-indexes and registries.

Stage 5 becomes viable and appropriate once critical mass has been reached during Stage 4. Dissemination can then take place through fora that are geographical (by city, region or country) or topical (democracy, environment or social services). At this level, a clearly defined taxonomy is vital and the use of standards for metadata becomes important (Surman, 2002).

### **8.4.1 Implications of the model**

Whilst the model described above privileges the technical sphere, it is important to recognise that in order for it to be useful for practitioners and policy-makers, ICT does operate within a wider societal framework. It is important to connect the Stages of this model to the wider socio-economic and democratic context of the community in which it is being

developed. This model has been developed from the research findings and the literature discussed herein and so it is grounded in the experiences of actual CI initiatives in Waitakere City and New Zealand. The model can be validated by cross-referencing and comparing the five stages described here with Day's (2004b) three component parts of community ICT: Policy; partnerships; and practice. By way of an example, the 'access' component of the five stage model can be related as follows:

**Policy**

Local government affirms that ICT skills are a basic life skill and commits to citizens having access to ICT within a 2Km radius of their home. This is implemented as an information access strategy that places internet-enabled computers in local libraries, council offices and even subsidises the use of commercial cyber-cafes. Other examples of policy driven initiatives could include telecentres, designed to provide alternative workspaces and reduce road congestion.

**Partnerships**

Hosts are required for sites; obvious partners are council and libraries. However, at this level the project has no community buy-in or ownership so the concept can be extended to include local community groups that already use the facilities. Partnerships become more significant as maturity increases.

**Practice**

If the technology is supported by the host, then little is required at this level; the technology could be passive and available for passive users. However, it is likely that more effective use could be achieved if local community members become proactive, perhaps creating groups, such as for senior citizens (where the peer-support can be used to break down technology barriers).

Alternatively, viewed from the perspective of each stage within the five-stage model, the importance of a forward-looking policy agenda becomes obvious:

<b>Access and literacy</b>	Driven by policy and potentially funded as a result, however, this often requires partnerships to acquire external expertise; localized delivery is an important success factor, meaning that community-based practitioners are required to actualize the policy. As already suggested, access and literacy strategies are important for disadvantaged or marginalized communities.
<b>Content and creation of content</b>	Partnerships can provide technology, skills and opportunity (for example, community-based hosting projects); local practitioners are required to drive the creation of content.
<b>Collation and dissemination of like resources</b>	As communities reach levels of ICT maturity, partnerships become vital to ensure equitable distribution and recognition of local content. Potential projects include geographic portals that can be beyond the resource capability of a single community and hence the availability of external funding partners becomes a critical success factor at this stage.

The foregoing temporal model provides an over-arching framework for the development of community-based CI initiatives, allowing planning, action and measurement. It provides a framework that can operationalise emergent eDemocracy initiatives. What these attributes described above and the models shown in Figure 51 and Figure 52 do not reveal is the ongoing process of change and eDemocracy enablement that must be undertaken if a community is to transition to a more engaged model of democracy via the use of networked ICT.

## 8.5 Establishing New Models for Engagement

Recognising the primary importance of situation CI initiatives within their social setting suggests that a strategy is needed to describe the processes by which grounded leadership

can facilitate and promote the transformative potential of ICT and to privilege the necessary advocacy, awareness-building and disruptive practices that are required to initiate and sustain transformation. The research findings presented here show that the leadership role of grounded advocates is of critical importance and this is reflected in the attributes of an emergent eDemocracy process described above. Such actors create disruptive spaces such that alternative discourses can arise. These spaces can be either physical or virtual and can include underground publishing, social software or community meetings.

This section will now explore a model of engagement that recognises individual motivations for engagement as well as the changing roles that key actors perform in order to situate a number of key processes that were identified from the analysis of the data. In the context of the overall model for emergent eDemocracy described in Figure 51, it focuses on the social sphere and the matter of transformative praxis. To do this, two existing theoretical models are used to offer a framework for engagement that is technologically agnostic as well as being communally orientated. These are the Transtheoretical Model of Change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997) and Moyer's lifecycle for social movements (Moyer, 2001). Combining these models provides a framework in which to locate the key social and community attributes of emergent eDemocracy and this results in a process-oriented way of understanding the ways in which ICT is adopted within a democratic context.

The Transtheoretical Model of Change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997), which is often implemented as Motivational Interviewing, emerged from decision-making theory and motivational psychology. This incorporates a trans-theoretical model of the stages of change, which act as a central construct around which individuals can modify behaviour (Velicer, Prochaska, Fava, Norman, & Redding, 1988). Originally this model was focussed on overcoming addictive behaviours. The model includes a series of independent variables which refer to both the process of change which must occur as well as a series of related outcome measures. These stages of change will be used here to define the key stages of awareness and process maturity applied to an emergent eDemocracy process and the

associated individual engagement. This can be expressed as five levels of awareness and action (or readiness), which are both linear and temporal:

Table 38: Stages of change.

<b>Pre-contemplation</b>	The person is not aware or not yet ready to consider that change is needed.
<b>Contemplation</b>	There is some awareness of the necessity (or desire) to change but resistance and ambivalence remains.
<b>Preparation</b>	At this stage people have become receptive to change and are actively considering how to make the changes needed.
<b>Action</b>	Actors are now engaged with making changes and adopting new ways of being or doing.
<b>Maintenance</b>	The changes are complete and new ways are now maintained.

Whereas traditional change models focus on influencing social norms, the Transtheoretical Model is based on individual motivation and intent. This is appropriate to grass-roots democratic engagement because such a model is able to allow for a resistance to systemic pressures to change, relying instead on individual motivation and valuing of the process or desired outcome (Wilhelm, 2000). A key precept of motivational interviewing is that the focus is on individual engagement when the individual is ready, rather than on the system forcing change.

Motivation and awareness extends to the general population, encompassing government actors, civil society and activists. It is this latter group that provides 'grounded leadership' as existing structures are challenged and new processes emerge. Therefore based on the analysis described thus far in this research, it is proposed here the catalyst for emergent eDemocracy, comes from such a group. Such activities mirror the traditional life-cycle of social movements and Moyer (2001, p.84) suggests that actors within such movements have four primary roles:

- Reformer

- Rebel
- Citizen
- Change-agent

Moyer (2001) suggests that each of these roles is needed to create and sustain social movements which work effectively. He suggests that social movements must be seen as responsible *citizens* by the wider public. At the same time, *rebels* must be willing to protest against established policies and social conditions and to speak out against issues that challenge hegemonic assumptions. To be effective, *change-agents* are needed who can educate and organise the public to become aware of such issues and then advocate for change. Finally, systems need *reformers* working with them. It is the *reformers* role to integrate new ideas into the mainstream.

Thus the actions of the activists influence and affect the stages of change for the wider population, leading through a range of socially-constructed roles and process that describe an emergent eDemocracy lifecycle. This process is presented in Figure 53.

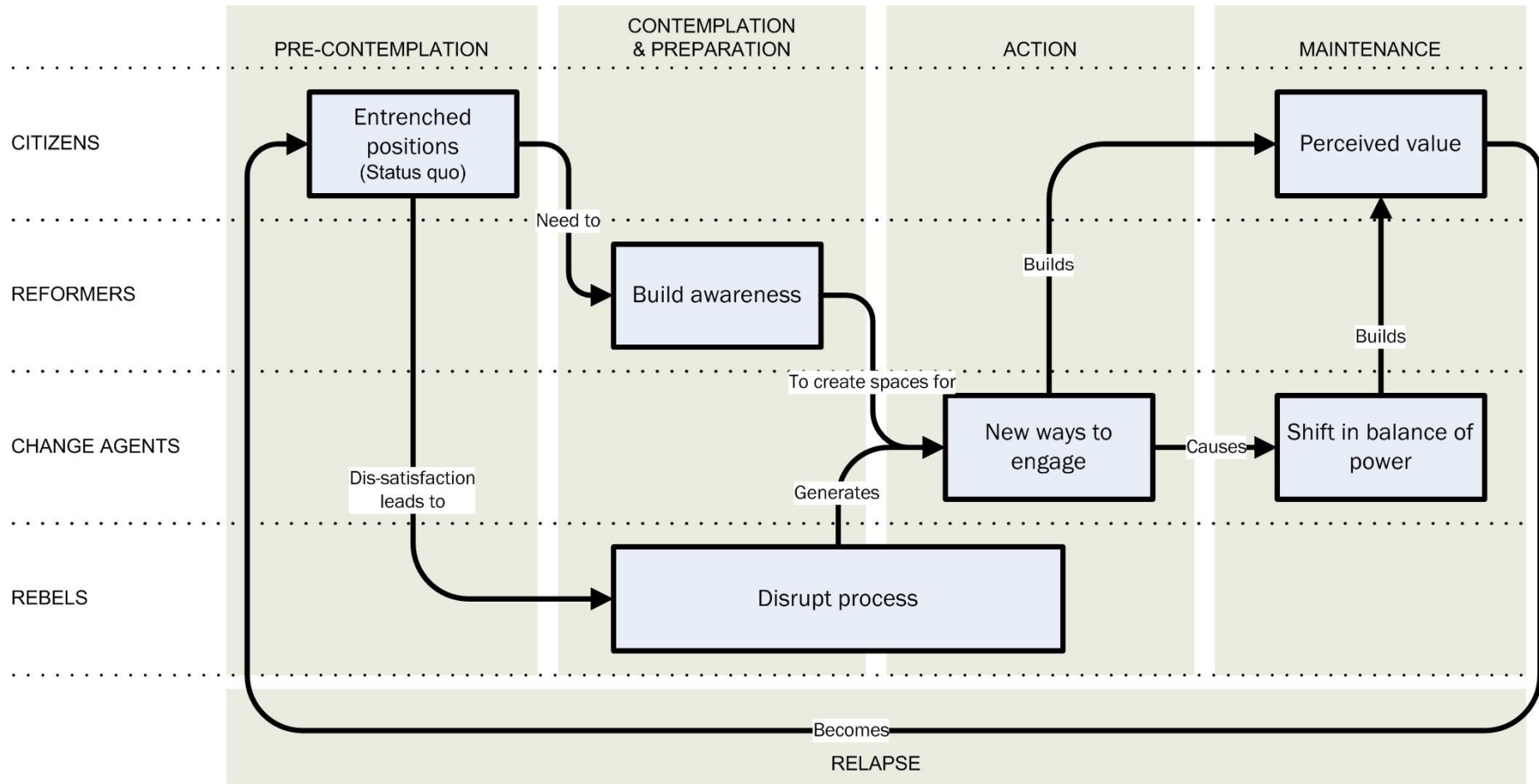


Figure 53: Emergent eDemocracy Lifecycle.

The categories shown in Figure 53 can be explored with regard to their implications and interactions as well as the different roles required by them, as Table 39 shows.

Table 39: Key stages

<b>Entrenched positions</b>	At the start of the process the <i>status quo</i> creates a sufficient level of disaffection that early-adopters of eDemocracy become active in attempting to force debate and promote alternatives.
<b>Building awareness</b>	This early activity creates limited but growing awareness and activism continues. However, this group is now joined by those who see opportunities for reforming the processes.
<b>Disruption to existing processes</b>	Identification of an opportunity has occurred and awareness-building will eventually lead to the emergence of new models of engagement. Some of these occur through the reformation of existing processes and others emerge from a transformative model that subverts existing practices. At this stage, success is dependent on key actors adopting and promoting new ways of engaging such that they can be translated into language understood by ordinary citizens.
<b>New ways to engage</b>	If the change-agents have been successful, the ideas that have been promoted now start to be adopted by the mainstream and become normative practice.
<b>Shift in balance of power</b>	If process has been sufficiently transformative then shifts in the balance of power should occur. Citizens have become more empowered and are more able to influence democratic process.
<b>Perceived value</b>	Models have been developed and processes refined and communicated such that citizens now see value in working this way and generally accept eDemocracy. At this point, eDemocracy becomes the status quo way of functioning.

Having reached the point where this is a general uptake of eDemocracy amongst citizens, new power-blocks and alliances can once again start to exert influence and the novelty of the



new wears off. Relapse is now a potential problem, where the new systems become entrenched and fail to respond to individual needs. At this point there is a risk that a new power-elite, or bourgeois public sphere, will emerge to replace the previous one.

This research suggests that participants (in Waitakere at least) were positioned at a contemplation and preparation stage: current activities relate to profile raising and small projects that attempt to build broader awareness. As one participant, a city councillor commented, eDemocracy is

something that's just beyond my grasp at the moment [Penny Hulse].

## 8.6 Conclusion

This chapter brings together the findings from both the survey instrument and the interview phase of the mixed methods study. Firstly it described the basic social process emerging from Phase II of the research and then it built on these findings to present an emergent model for citizen-enabled local eDemocracy. Grounded leadership, which is a basic social process, is identified as a necessary and over-arching process required for this to occur. It brings together leadership from both community and council, thus creating opportunities to build awareness and increase literacy in ICT. That such recognised leadership places value in the use of ICT, is hopefully reflected and adopted more widely. This leads to the disruption of existing processes and eventually, a shift in the balance of power such that citizens become more closely involved with their democratic process. A framework for this to occur, was then explored. It positions the role of leadership and the importance of disruptive practices that can challenge existing hegemonic and monolithic discourses and processes.

The findings highlight that partnerships are a fundamental part of emergent eDemocracy. Yet they also show that many challenges exist to establishing effective community-government partnerships. Not least of which are the entrenched views of 'government as expert' and an approach of 'benevolent bullying' – where bureaucrats support change only so far as it complies with their agenda and their control is not challenged. These risks can

only be overcome by increased public awareness accompanied by an attitudinal change towards ICT that positions it as not simply 'just useful' but as an integral part of democratic process itself, where citizens see their role to not simply to call for change but to lead it.

The effective use of ICT bolsters citizen's ability to have an increased role in local democracy not just because they are enabling and transformative technologies but also because it is the social transformation that the technology itself creates that becomes the potential for long-term adoption. The framework discussed herein situates a temporal life-cycle for the effective use of community ICT where access foreshadows literacy and content acts as a motivator to continued adoption. As the model matures, communities become creators of new online content and, ultimately, localised neutral channels for dissemination emerge. Hence a set of clearly identified leadership roles is positioned within an overarching social model of transformation. These leadership roles change as the process matures and adoption processes also change. This highlights not only the key stages of the emergence of eDemocracy but also the inherent risk that such process themselves become a tool of a new power elite.

# Chapter 9 – Conclusion and Recommendations

## 9.1 Introduction

*He aha te kai a te Rangatira? Ko te kōrero*<sup>72</sup>.

This research has set out to examine the effects of using ICT to facilitate and influence democratic processes in a regional community in New Zealand and to identify what factors impacted on the adoption of ICT for this purpose. Through a process of a literature review, survey and interview it has identified and described processes used within the community for engagement, consultation and development between a local council and community. It examined the extent to which these were, or could be, facilitated and influenced by ICT. Two research questions were explored:

- RQ1**            What impact does ICT have on facilitating democratic processes?
- RQ2**            What is an appropriate model for describing the processes required to establish and sustain the effective use of ICT in local democratic processes?

These questions were examined through a mixed methods study using both quantitative and qualitative methods and was guided by both critical social theory and a social-critical approach. A broad range of literature was used to develop a New Zealand-wide survey, the results of which informed interviews with key stakeholders in Waitakere City.

This chapter summarises the research findings and provides reflections on the application of the chosen methodology before discussing the research outcomes in the context of the research questions posed for this investigation. It then discusses the contribution of this research from academic, policy and community development perspectives and highlights the research's

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<sup>72</sup> What is the food of Chiefs? It is talk (Māori proverb).

significance. Finally, as a result of this investigation some priority future research opportunities have become apparent and these are identified.

## 9.2 Key Findings

The survey findings showed that ICT was becoming a significant resource for the community and voluntary sector in New Zealand. The analysis of this survey work and subsequent investigation demonstrated that barriers to more effective use of ICT for participation in local democratic processes clearly existed. The findings suggested that the internet was most likely to be used as a source of information or a tool for communication, rather than for publishing new ideas or views. This indicated that internet use was in the relatively early stages of maturity as far as eDemocracy was concerned and this was reflected in the way local government used the internet to interact with communities. Hence, the local eDemocracy initiatives in this community could be positioned in Dahl's framework of democratic ideal of 'enlightened understanding' rather than attempting to support 'effective participation' (Dahl, 1989).

This research has shown that the current models of local democracy described in this research were not effective in being able to describe an encompassing process for eDemocracy. Even in Waitakere City, which is regarded as a New Zealand leader in community consultation (D. Craig & Larner, 2002), the emergent reality of ICT-enabled democratic process was a source of significant frustration for community activists (the researcher included). They often felt 'unheard' by existing structures, perceived that the progress was slow in coming and hard-fought. In recognising the importance of community participation in emerging democratic processes, the New Zealand Local Government Act (2002) was designed to create more consultative models of local government. However, this research found that in reality theoretical enhancements in engagement failed to avert perceptions of a democratic crisis amongst many community activists.

Despite the rhetoric of intent enshrined in the legislation, the local government council involved in this research intrinsically valued the input of community less than its own internal advice or the advice of paid external consultants. As Wright (2006) has suggested, that 'risk mitigation' and 'technocracy' were alive and well in many local government situations and that they were stifling attempts at 'e-enabled' local democracy. It was as if a game was being played, where community input was sought but only acted upon when it aligned with council's own agenda.

A theme to emerge from this research was 'benevolent bullying'. The local council appeared on the surface to 'play fair' and to engage with community but in reality it seemed to position itself (even arrogantly so, as some participants described) as an expert and viewed the community as less informed, even troublesome and certainly problematic. This was similar to the experience of local government in Sweden as described by Ranerup (2000) and suggests colonisation of the lifeworld through imposed technocratic process, similar to that described by Ritzer (2000). Ironically, the assumption of the local government council as an expert was found to be flawed when it came to the use of ICT where this research found the Council processes lagged many approaches used in community. The examination undertaken in this research indicates that the relevant expertise for the instigation of eDemocracy did in fact lie with the community. In point of fact, the council had consistently impeded progress in the adoption of eDemocracy approaches, struggling to grasp the implications of the new technologies and was often dismissive of them or felt threatened by them. It was clear that those working on CI initiatives (both inside and outside the council) continued to face significant challenges to make limited progress.

As well as barriers to effective local eDemocracy, strategies that can support effective partnerships and which could start a process of transformation within the context of a local government democracy were identified. 'Grounded leadership' emerged as the basic social process for emergent local eDemocracy for actors in both community and local government. It is a simple truism that the actors needed to collaborate in order to bridge the community and government structures for citizen-based local eDemocracy to emerge. Leadership is temporal and the effectiveness of it depends on the skill-sets and roles adopted, with attributes varying over time. Change emerges as a socially driven phenomenon which, in the case of eDemocracy, occurs through the alignment of technology adoption with social process. The study found that a key transformative attribute of emergent eDemocracy is that of 'disruption', where current processes and power structures are challenged or superseded leading to the emergence of new processes that are enabled by ICT and grounded in the community.

Transformative praxis links the social and the technical sphere providing a space for reclaiming social power in order to implement new technical systems. The findings reveal that new or modified strategies, processes and systems occur in the technical sphere through a transformative praxis that originates in the ideas and actions taking place in the social sphere, through awareness

building and advocacy. Within society, ICT must be adopted and integrated into democratic life so that it can realise sufficient perceived value. For this to happen, ICT must be available and so policy frameworks must guide ICT adoption, targeting effective use. Failure to do so exacerbates digital exclusion.

Social transformation is required to build awareness and adoption of new methods of engagement. Hegemonic power structures must be challenged through a number of different roles, ranging from radical destabilising to collaborative process transformation. Local citizen-centric eDemocracy becomes possible when:

1. Citizens' barriers to access are reduced, when they have the pre-requisite literacy skills and when they are aware of a wide-range of content;
2. Citizens see value in new processes of engagement and they are motivated to participate in civil society; and
3. The processes of engagement allows citizens to create and manage processes in a way that privileges discourses amongst citizens and their ability to act on the consequences of such discourses.

If eDemocracy is to move beyond information provision and narrow models of government-managed engagement, extending the democratic model past an electronically-enabled *status quo*, then these findings suggest that it is critical for citizens as well as governments to take and to lead action. This research suggests that effective engagement will only occur by working from both ends of the democratic spectrum, sometimes pushing against existing power structures and at other times working with them, to allow for new spaces for effective engagement to emerge. Increased participation in local democracy will not occur because of the use of ICT alone. Participation in this context is a dual process of increasing engagement (for example, building awareness of issues – which ICT can support) and harnessing new technology to reduce the barriers to engagement. The effect of increased engagement is depicted in Figure 54, highlighting that increased awareness leads to greater motivation to become involved and that, as barriers to participation are reduced, the threshold for active participation is lowered.

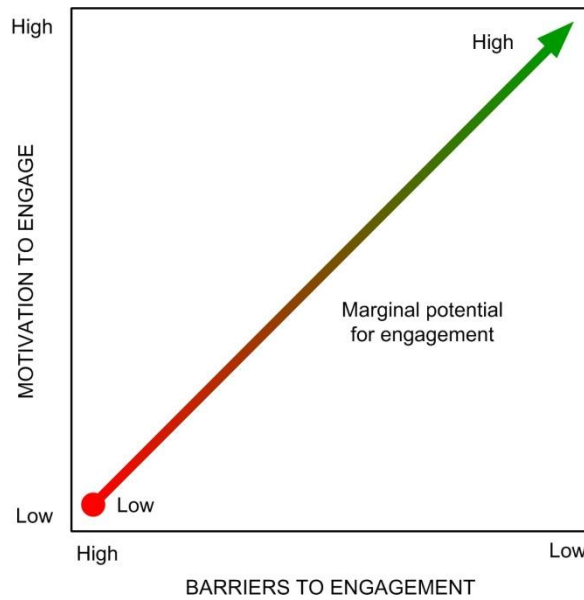


Figure 54: Motivation versus barriers to participation.

ICT is not the key to increased engagement happening – it is the power and increasing importance of information and communication that matters (Keeble & Loader, 2001). What is important is that citizens are motivated to demand a role in constructing models of government, act to ensure that their views are heeded and ensure that they have open and effective channels that support deliberative discourses. It is naïve to assume that ICT will transform democracy and re-invigorate local decision-making if the focus remains on projects and technology. The findings described in this thesis indicate that eDemocracy will not support the re-engagement of citizens if it is left solely as the domain of governments and their technocratic partners.

Whilst the findings support the argument that ICT lowers the barriers to effective democratic engagement (S. Coleman, 2004b; O'Loughlin, 2001; Schuler, 2000), increasing rates of effective participation requires those already engaged with both local democracy and ICT to advocate for their uptake and to actively develop and promote examples of how they can be used. If re-engagement is to happen, it appears that it will most likely be a gradual process. It is likely to start from a relatively small group of those who are active who will influence those around them, and so the pattern of adoption can ripple out from there. This pattern will be replicated in both the community sector and within local government structures; committed and enthusiastic leaders are required who can communicate in the language of stakeholders to push new models of engagement and the use of ICT.

The findings presented show that, where ICT was being used, communication *per se* and the flow of information are improved. The findings also point to a deficit of knowledge and access and that the immediacy of access to ICT plays a pivotal part in continuous adoption and effective use. Issues of ICT literacy, time allocation and skills required to become effective users are highlighted. Therefore, new democratic models alone are not enough even if these emerge from the community. Initiatives must be developed in parallel that address the ubiquity of access, the rollout and adoption of broadband and in ensuring that all of society has the opportunity to become information and ICT literate.

### 9.3 Reflections on methodology

The choice of methodology and its application affects the nature and outcome of any research (Creswell, 1998a). A mixed methods approach was selected in the early part of the research when it became clear that it would be impossible to obtain suitable data solely from the intended research location. Broadening the research within a single phase (to, for example, a single national study) was also problematic as it would have removed the focus on emerging local eDemocracy within a single geographic community. A loss in the descriptive richness of the data and Waitakere's unique political and cultural landscape were factors given consideration. The choice of research paradigm is obviously also important. CST was chosen because it allowed for issues of communication, power and control to be exposed and privileged. Further, it linked strongly with principles of deliberative democracy and to concepts of the public sphere. It might be argued that the choice of CST could bias the outcome, providing a narrowly focussed lens. However, this matter of bias was addressed through implementing a process of validity checking in Phase I and by following the key tenets of GTM in Phase II. It was also important to ensure that the presentation of the qualitative findings in particular used a narrative approach, whereby the voices of participants were privileged. This has resulted in a theoretically valid piece of work that at the same time posits that research is most useful when the findings can be practically applied back into the community.

The chosen methodological approach appears to have been successful in being able to describe, analyse and deduct key elements affecting the emergence of eDemocracy in a local government context. The national survey conducted at the commencement of this research contextualised 'the local' and provided a broad set of data that was independently useful to researchers, practitioners



and policy-makers. It presented an overview of ICT usage amongst those who were already integrating it into their personal and community lives. The focus in CI research is often on organisations and groups and so this phase presented a unique perspective of ICT usage amongst a broad group of early adopters in the sector. It also provided a significant contribution toward the design of Phase II of research that was located in Waitakere. Whilst it was from the second qualitative phase of the research that the key findings emerged, these would be less complete, grounded or rigorous without the initial survey data to guide them.

Using mixed methods is not a panacea. Whilst its application in this research supports the assertion of others using the approach that mixed methods increases rigour, allows for findings to emerge where otherwise they might be missed, and provides greater understanding of the research question (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007; Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003; Giddings & Grant, 2006; Morse, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), it also provides challenges for the researcher. Adopting a mixed methods approach increases both the complexity and scale of the research. That was most certainly the case. Rather than one neatly compartmentalised project, it was necessary to develop two completely separate, complex data collection instruments, to analyse two data sets and produce two sets of findings. To compound this complexity, it was then necessary to further analyse the data sets to integrate the overall findings into a coherent whole.

The payoff was that this research now demonstrates a more complete analysis. The findings are more grounded than if only one approach had been taken and the 'fit' of the Phase II findings was enhanced by reference to findings of Phase I. With cognisance of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) suggestions for ensuring rigour, it was possible to reflect that the mixed methods approach significantly enhanced this process, since Phase I's broad findings assist in applying and contextualising the findings from Phase II. This suggests that these findings are credible and transferable to other locations. Auditability was demonstrated at the individual phase level, particularly through memos and diagrams during the GTM phase. However, it was further enhanced by the bringing together of findings to create an overall set of findings, which also aided the confirmability of findings. Confirmability also occurred through member-checking with participants in the study and individuals in similar roles in other locations.

The model presented in Chapter 8 is grounded in the data and, therefore, it is a primarily theoretical model to demonstrate how eDemocracy can emerge in a community such that it privileges the voices of citizens. Although drawn from the findings of the study its veracity has been confirmed by applying the model to other known post-emergent environments involving community ICT, by presenting the findings back to key research participants for their reflection and confirmation and by presenting the research to academic colleagues. All three methods suggest that the model is both practical and practicable.

## 9.4 Revisiting the research questions

Having situated the outcome of the study and reflected on the application of the chosen methodology, this next section will re-visit the research questions defined in Chapter 1 and will briefly summarise the outcomes of the research in the context of each question and sub-question.

### **RQ1 – What impact does ICT have on facilitating democratic processes?**

Where it is available, ICT lowers the barriers to democratic engagement by making information more readily available, providing additional channels for communication and by reducing the cost of publishing and dissemination. Barriers to effective ‘e-engagement’ include the lack of citizen-centric processes and attempts by government agencies to control how, when and where consultation takes place. Communities can clearly utilise the internet to overcome this but they must firstly have access and secondly have the skills, time, attitude and resources to become effective users of ICT.

### **SQ1.1 – What is understood to be meant by the terms eDemocracy, eGovernment and eGovernance?**

The findings suggest that the understanding of the meaning of the terms ‘eGovernment’ and ‘eGovernance’ is congruent with the literature discussed in Chapter 2. These terms refer to the use of electronic channels to replicate the existing physical activities and processes of government. However, participant understanding of eDemocracy suggests that it is viewed as more transformative in nature. It was seen to be more about moving citizens closer to government (and vice versa) and the findings promote eDemocracy as being:

- the effective and timely provision of information;

- the availability of alternative channels for consultation;
- the ability to communicate with officials and elected representatives;
- online voting<sup>73</sup>; and
- the equitable provision of access to ICT and the skills to use them for democratic engagement.

### **SQ1.2 – What processes exist for community engagement, consultation and development?**

The research identified ‘awareness’ and ‘use of the formal community-local government consultation mechanisms’, including the Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP), Annual Plan and the ability to contact councillors or council officers as being available. It also showed how groups were able to form groups and lobby, particularly where single issues were concerned. The findings further showed that ICT enhances this engagement process by increasing the capacity to disseminate information, to capture different opinions and by increasing a community’s ability to connect, both inside that community and with like-minded actors elsewhere.

### **SQ1.3 – What motivates citizens to become involved in the democratic process?**

This question was answered on two levels. The first was a short-term, temporal answer which acknowledges the prevalence of issues-based democratic engagement. However, if this engagement was to be maintained and sustained, the answer became more complex. The analysis showed that motivation was a combination of personal motivation to engage and a perceived ability to effectively engage, where actors consider that they were able to affect some change or improved outcome. The survey findings clearly showed that those who were active in local democracy considered that they were able to affect change and could influence the decision makers.

### **SQ1.4 – What motivates participation in an eDemocracy process?**

For those who were already engaged, eDemocracy became a new medium to enable connections. Its primary value over and above traditional forms of engagement (letters, telephone, face-to-face, meetings, public mass media) related to improvements in the communication process itself (including but limited to being asynchronous, media richness, the capacity for involving groups and overcoming restrictions of time and space) and the ability to access and distribute information more easily, cheaply and widely. The findings suggest that citizen-centred eDemocracy (ICT-

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<sup>73</sup> This was considered a relatively minor subset.

enabled participation) reduces the barriers to effective democratic engagement which has components of spontaneity, overlapping agendas, self-organising systems, potential for rapid escalation and involving a wide range of understanding across actors.

**SQ1.5 – What factors influence and facilitate the adoption of ICT amongst those with an interest in local democracy?**

As indicated in Chapters 2 and 5, the adoption process identified in this research suggests that primary importance is placed on the value of ICT. The technology is not a factor *per se*, rather it is the benefit that can be gained from having access to and making effective use of the technology, particularly the internet. Hence, adoption is largely restricted by the individual's skill-levels which includes attitude as well as social and component knowledge but also by the availability of a broadband connection which dramatically escalates the value of the interaction. Chapter 5 identifies proximity of access as important to internet usage. This proximity is not simply about adoption but continuous adoption and the effective integration of ICT into an individual's life. Chapter 8 addresses the levels of adoption at a community-level and the significance of grounded leadership for motivating widespread adoption.

**SQ1.6 – What is the basic social process influencing the adoption of eDemocracy practices?**

The analysis identified the process of 'grounded leadership' as described in Chapter 8. Grounded Leadership involves a process of overcoming exclusion and disenfranchisement by key individuals in both the community and within government.

**SQ1.7 – What is the basic social process of enhanced civic participation through eDemocracy?**

There is a process of transformed engagement, where ICT, once adopted and effectively used, becomes a catalyst for new models of democratic engagement. Initially, this is likely to be limited to those already engaged. However, the analysis indicates that through a process of grounded leadership, ICT can reduce barriers of access to the democratic process and increase the likelihood that others will engage, initially at least on an issues-based level.

**RQ2 – What is an appropriate model for describing the processes required to establish and sustain the effective use of ICT in local democratic processes?**

Chapter 8 goes to some effort to describe proposed models that build on existing work and that have emerged from the analysis. In summary this work consists of a framework that integrates the

social and technical spheres through a process of transformative praxis. Change and integration within the local democratic process occurs as key individuals – grounded leaders – advocate for and act to deliver change. They create awareness, become thought-leaders and deliver practical solutions. ‘Doing’ is of itself not enough. Awareness needs to be generated amongst those not already engaged in local democracy or their community and awareness increased such that citizens are able to recognise value to themselves and their neighbours in democratic participation and in ICT as a tool to enable such participation. Value inherently lies in the information and in the process of communication, not in the technology itself. Therefore, a model is needed within the framework, to map out a path to the effective use of ICT within a community setting. Whilst temporal and non-linear, the model described in the previous chapter articulates this as a five-stage process consisting of:

- Access;
- Literacy;
- Content;
- Content creation; and
- Dissemination.

This framework supports a second model, that of a life-cycle of change. This life-cycle of change describes a set of stages to be experienced as well as the roles required within communities for the new processes supported by the use of ICT to emerge and for these new processes to become normative. It suggests that those not engaged in local democracy and who have yet to contemplate engagement, can be motivated by individuals around them and by topical issues. The role of eDemocracy is to reduce barriers to effective democratic engagement and to allow multiple models for engagement that shift both the nature and proximity of access to democracy.

## 9.5 Recommendations

The following recommendations are drawn from the research findings and are divided into policy and practice areas.

## 9.5.1 Policy-makers

It is important to consider the internet as a public commons, shifting current thinking away from constructs of mass, corporatised media to allow for the consideration of eDemocracy inhabiting a more complex and diverse democratic space. This in turn allows attention to be shifted to the development of policies that enable the effective use of ICT and more deliberative and participative models of democratic process.

Barriers to access for participation itself (as well as ICT-enabled participation) clearly exist and policy must focus not only on the processes of engagement but also on ensuring equitable access to these processes. Failure to do this will compound both the digital and democratic deficits and will result in a multi-tier elitist democratic system, from which many citizens are (or will at least perceive themselves to be) excluded.

The design of strong participative democracy must incorporate digital channels. To achieve this, policy-makers and those who design and manage service delivery within democratic processes need to become better informed with regard to the nature, extent and potential of ICT to deliver better policy, improved acceptance of the policy, greater uptake of the policy as well as increased flexibility in adapting the policy to changed circumstance and in dealing with the granular nature of society.

Better understanding of the benefits of ICT is required amongst policy-makers if opportunities for process and structural transformation are to be realised, rather than simply 'e-enabling' existing processes. The use of ICT needs to be better understood: How can it support the requirements of enabling legislation? In New Zealand this has particular relevance to the mandated requirements for engagement in the Local Government Act (2002).

ICT cuts across the traditional 'silos' (separate government departments and agencies based on previous perceptions of professional expertise) within local government. Therefore effective use is unlikely to occur unless policy-makers are able to ensure a strategic and whole-of-government approach to ICT adoption and use. Recognising the impact of such transformation will provide opportunities for reducing overlap, the waste of 'sunk cost resources', competition and confusion between service delivery components.

Policy-makers need to recognise that local government is not by itself an expert in the effective use of ICT for local community benefit and it must be willing to engage in good faith with communities and others outside of government in order to create opportunities for democratic transformation and to allow new models of engagement to emerge. This requires an attitudinal shift on the part of local government and recognition in society of increasing community responsibility for engagement in an emerging environment of increasing self-reliance for many services. Internal leadership within the government agency (both employed and elected) is vital to the effective adoption of ICT-enabled engagement and participation (eDemocracy), particularly in the early stages of development.

Funding is required to assist CI initiatives to continue and to develop in ways that effectively enhance engagement in governance, policy development and service delivery in the emerging and increasingly complex environment that is privileging self-service and self-reliance. However, such funding needs to be targeted at partnerships and where opportunities for scalability and continuity are clearly identified. Local government must be very clear about how it funds projects which would otherwise have no way of surviving as this does not necessarily achieve the right level of community support and commitment. However, local government also needs to recognise emerging responsibilities in providing 'public good' from recurrent expenditure in a time when ICT can be grouped with accepted infrastructural responsibilities in previous times.

## **9.5.2 Practitioners and Communities**

Communities need to be encouraged to develop models of democratic engagement that work for them, rather than simply inheriting government-imposed models. Such approaches need to be embedded at all levels of governance, service delivery and education in civic responsibility (civic intelligence). Hence, Local Government needs to be encouraged to take a leadership role in advocating, supporting delivering public education in these matters.

This research has again highlighted that collaboration is an important key to success. It is important to build partnerships with like-minded actors across civil society and also for these partnerships to be willing to engage with and work with local government. This is particularly the case where community-based projects require the resources to scale up or external funding.

As discussed in the analysis of this research, leadership within the community is a vital success factor. Such leadership must be focussed on social and community issues, communication and information exchange and must also communicate effectively with all stakeholders.

As the research has highlighted, adopting a primarily 'technology-focussed' approach to eDemocracy and CI will fail to fully capitalise on the transformative potential of ICT. ICT must be seen as a tool and a medium within a social context not as a technological 'fix-all' that just needs to be made available for magic to occur. The key stakeholder commentary reinforced the need to view the emergence of eDemocracy as a long-term initiative, where different phases require different relationships and different roles.

In seeking success from ICT-enabled participation with local government, communities should be prepared to look for broad-ranging partnerships and to focus on the long-term continuity of the initiative, particularly if external government funding is required.

## **9.6 Contribution to Knowledge**

This study is significant because it investigates emergent local eDemocracy as both a broad concept and as specific processes related to a geographic location. The findings contribute to knowledge in the fields of CI, eDemocracy, community development and public policy by supporting an emergent debate on the construction of an online civil society. The findings are presented at both a theoretical and a practical level, making a contribution to the academic discipline and to policy-makers as well as providing findings that can be implemented locally by citizens and governments. The research contributes to existing theory and practice in CI by describing actual benefits, issues, enablers and barriers relating to the use of ICT in a civil society setting. It offers a significant contribution to the emerging field of eDemocracy by describing the conditions under which the enhanced use of ICT in local democratic processes can emerge and by defining a typology and framework for eDemocracy.

Locally, the research describes an historical and relevant community-government partnership process, offering learning and support for enhancing what is occurring in Waitakere City. The development of a framework, typology and component models to describe the processes of



emergent eDemocracy supports developments in local government in a wide range of locations. This is important because the research identifies both a lack of knowledge and lack of power as barriers to effective engagement. Such negative factors can be linked to a concept of civic intelligence that needs to be further explored. The findings also provide ideas and a framework for practitioners to develop their own localised models for democratic engagement.

The results of this research will be disseminated in the fields of CI, community development and public policy. This has benefits in two important ways: It adds a special perspective to active academic debates around the world which currently focus on eDemocracy and ICT for civic engagement; and it provides a platform for decision-makers involved with policy and practice around ICT in any community.

The research was embedded in the emerging eDemocracy processes within Waitakere City, in New Zealand, allowing it to support projects in the City. Information, observations and analyses from the research have been reported to local networks throughout the research to support localised processes and participants efforts in these processes. The study produced information that aids the formation of local eDemocracy processes enabled by the use of ICT that can be applied at a policy level by other local government entities. It is hoped that this study will act as a model for enhancing participation in the democratic process through ICT.

The research has resulted in a generic meta-model for community ICT that can be used as a guide for developing community-level democratic strategies. It is anticipated that this research will play a key role in shifting the agenda of eGovernance from a focus on the economic efficiencies and service delivery mind-set of eGovernment toward a community, citizen and participatory-driven model of eDemocracy in the location of the research. It is hoped that this meta-model will assist in reversing the decline in participation in democracy and government not only in Waitakere City in New Zealand, but also in a wider context.

The research identifies a typology and vocabulary for local eDemocracy. It is anticipated that this will lead to academic publications and that it will be a valuable tool in influencing and enabling policy. However, the value of such a document is limited to its distribution and this work may be seen as a localised first attempt, which will form part of an ongoing discourse.

The research occurred in parallel with a number of CI initiatives and groups in Waitakere City with which the researcher was associated and has enabled the ongoing research to assist local processes in a variety of ways. For instance, the researcher was able to contribute new ideas and alternative viewpoints to the various groups involved in CI in Waitakere City. Participants in the groups were also participants in the research. Therefore, any insights they gained through taking part in the research can become an input to the local process.

Academic and community-oriented publishing during the study<sup>74</sup> highlighting the research findings and knowledge gained, have influenced the wider community (within and beyond Waitakere City) as to what was happening in the city. This promoted the projects, thereby leading to increased awareness and change.

## 9.7 Future Research

The framework defined in Chapter 8 is derived from the research findings. It offers a starting point for implementing a 'whole-of-city' citizen-centric eDemocracy initiative based on community-government partnerships. However, the model remains untested beyond Waitakere and therefore an opportunity exists to model other territorial and regional authorities by implementing an eDemocracy project using the facets described in this framework.

The framework described in Chapter 7 was developed in one location and it does not particularly account for cultural variations which exist between different territorial regions – even within New Zealand. Further research would be useful to identify the cultural factors that make Waitakere more inclined to engage with community than perhaps is the case for other cities and how variations might affect the uptake of eDemocracy in particular and ICT in general.

The research findings suggest that civic re-engagement through technology requires a parallel process of increasing awareness and interest in local issues and promoting ICT (in the broadest sense) to support the effort. The process also needs to be supported by grounded leadership from both the community and the council. Both the literature review and the research findings suggest that, initially at least, eDemocracy remains the domain of those already engaged. Further research

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<sup>74</sup> See appendix E.

would be useful to identify motivators for democratic engagement (positive and negative), to identify what might trigger engagement or help sustain it and how ICT might be targeted to enhance or support this. One logical area for further investigation emanating from this research is that the concept of civic intelligence could quantify the community parameters predicting interest, knowledge and capacity to engage in participatory approaches.

Furthermore, the foregoing findings suggest further exploration may be formulated more specifically in relation to how ICT can be used to lower barriers to democratic engagement – as well as to raise awareness amongst those who consider themselves disenfranchised. In addition, there would be significant value in conducting other more narrative-based or ethnographic studies that would allow individual voices to be exposed in such a way that they might describe the interpersonal relations within a local community developing eDemocracy solutions.

## 9.8 Conclusion

This research has identified and described processes that occur between and within a community and local government that can lead to the adoption of eDemocracy practices that can privilege citizens. Through a mixed methods study it has identified and discovered how ICT was being used, what barriers prevented effective uptake and what strategies could lead to improvements in the adoption of ICT *per se* and, specifically, to support community-led democratic engagement. Whilst the use of CST privileges communication and power-relations and can be seen as overly-theoretical, this has been tempered by the adoption of GTM for the qualitative analysis of data in Phase II. This allowed the voices of participants to be privileged, thereby retaining a close connection to the community and people involved in the research.

eDemocracy is shown to be more than using the internet to enable the processes of local democracy. For the participants, it incorporates strategies to ensure the equitable and effective use of ICT as well. The research has shown that a process of transformation is required for effective eDemocracy to emerge. Such transformation originates in the social sphere, where grounded leadership drives and supports change through technical actions that lead to transformed democratic processes. The investigation reinforced the notion that value of ICT lies in the potential to lower the barriers to democratic engagement and to provide tools which communities can develop and manage for themselves. The evaluation found that citizen-led local eDemocracy did

not remove or challenge the role of representative government. It does however widen the options for how democracy occurs, allowing for the creation of more deliberative, issues-based and individually-focussed platforms for engagement.

Above all, this research shows that ICT is a tool to be harnessed by communities and government, that leadership is required from both sides and that effective eDemocracy platforms will only emerge if the grounded leadership exists within both local communities and government to promote and support them.

*E patai atu ahau ki a koe,*

*He aha te mea nui o te Ao?*

*He tangata, he tangata, he tangata<sup>75</sup>.*

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<sup>75</sup> Let me ask you / What is the most important thing in this world? / It is people, it is people, it is people (Māori proverb).

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# Appendices

## Appendix A – Survey instrument

### The impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) in facilitating and influencing the democratic process in Aotearoa/New Zealand

## SURVEY

*Kia ora, Talofa lava, Talofa, Fakalofa lahi atu, Malo e lelei, Bula vinaka, Kia orana, Dobra Došli, Namaste, Ni hao, Greetings!*

The aim of this research is to examine how computers and the Internet are being used by people to take part in and influence the democratic processes in regional communities. This research is being undertaken as part of my PhD in the Faculty of Informatics and Communication at Central Queensland University. The research will consist of a survey (this form), interviews with individuals and the observation of existing processes (such as meetings and electronic discussions). The study results will be used to learn more about the benefits and barriers to using ICT in a local community. This survey is being carried out across New Zealand.

If you prefer, you can complete this survey online at: [www.edemocracy.co.nz](http://www.edemocracy.co.nz). Otherwise, please complete this form and return it in the envelope provided (postage is included) or fax the completed form to me on 09 817 1103.

Thank you for your assistance with this research.

Andy Williamson

## Information about the Research

Your participation in this research is voluntary and the information provided remains anonymous. You will not be identified in the results. You can withdraw from the study at any time and can refrain from answering any question. If you don't wish to answer a question, simply leave it blank.

All information you provide will be treated as confidential, which means that it will not be passed on to anyone else in any way that could identify you. The information will be analysed and you can receive feedback in the form of a summary of the data collected, if you wish. Information obtained will be presented in a PhD thesis and might be published in research papers or through appropriate community outlets. The data collected for this project is subject to the University's Code of Conduct and the requirement that it be retained for a period of five years. It will be stored on a computer accessible only with the use of a password or in a locked and secure cabinet.

If you would like more information about the project you can write, telephone or email the researcher:

Andy Williamson  
PO Box 60-517

Titirangi  
Waitakere City

Phone: 09 817 1133  
Fax : 09 817 1103  
Email: andy@wairua.co.nz

Or the Principal Supervisor of the study:

Emeritus Professor John Dekkers  
Faculty of Informatics & Communication  
Central Queensland University  
Rockhampton  
Queensland 4702, Australia  
Phone: 00 61 7 4923 2611  
Email: j.dekkers@cqu.edu.au

*Please contact Central Queensland University's Office of Research (Telephone 00-61-7 4923 2607) should there be any concerns about the nature and/or conduct of this research project.*

## Definitions used in this survey

<b>Community</b>	A group of people having common interests or forming a distinct segment of society.
<b>Computer</b>	A personal computer, such as a PC or Macintosh, including desktop and portable (notebook) computers.
<b>Democracy</b>	Government by popular representation, where the supreme power is retained by the people but is indirectly exercised through a system of representation and delegated authority periodically renewed. Includes principles of social equality and respect for the individual within a community.
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technologies; means telephones, cellular phones, computers, the Internet, handheld computers, software and related technologies.
<b>Internet</b>	Connecting your computer to the Internet, including web sites, email, newsgroups, online chat etc.
<b>Online</b>	An activity or event that happens through using the Internet.
<b>Politics</b>	The management of a political party; the conduct and contests of parties with reference to political measures or the administration of public affairs; the advancement of candidates to office.

# CONSENT FORM

Your consent in writing is needed to confirm your involvement. Signing this form means that you have agreed to be a part of the research but does not stop you from changing your mind at a later time. You can withdraw from the research at any time and doing so will not affect your public or community standing. To withdraw from the research please contact the Principal Supervisor at the address on page ii.

I \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ confirm that:

- The nature and the purpose of the study have been explained to me and I agree to participate.
- I understand that the information obtained from the study will be used within a PhD thesis and may be published.
- I understand that I will not be directly identified by name in any publications.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any stage.
- I understand that I have the right to refrain from answering any questions should I so wish.
- I understand that I may not directly benefit from taking part in the study and that I will not receive any payment for participating in this research.
- I understand that confidentiality is guaranteed.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I will be provided with a summary of the results of the study before publication if I request them.
- The data collected for this research is subject to the Code of Conduct of the University and the requirement that all data relating to the research be retained for a period of five years, and be stored in a secure location, in a locked filing cabinet.
- I confirm that I am over 18 years of age.

**Signature of participant:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Please contact Central Queensland University's Office of Research (Telephone 00-61-7 4923 2607) should there be any concerns about the nature and/or conduct of this research project.*

Would you like to receive a summary of this research when it is available?  Yes  No

The second part of this research will involve interviewing people involved in community and political activity in Waitakere City. Interviews will take approximately one hour. If you live, work or volunteer in Waitakere City, would you be willing to take part in an interview as part of this research?  Yes  No

If you answered 'yes' to either of the two previous questions, please provide your name and contact details so that you can be contacted:	Address	<input style="width: 100%; height: 40px;" type="text"/>
	Telephone	<input style="width: 100%; height: 25px;" type="text"/>
	Mobile	<input style="width: 100%; height: 25px;" type="text"/>
	Email	<input style="width: 100%; height: 25px;" type="text"/>

Note: these details will not be used to identify you and will not be linked in any way to the answer that you provide on the survey form.

## The impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) in facilitating and influencing the democratic processes in Aotearoa/New Zealand

### SURVEY

This survey consists of four sections. A space is provided for you to write comments and ask questions that you might have. It will take you about 20 minutes to complete this survey. If you do not wish to answer a specific question, please leave it blank.

#### A – Your Computer and Internet use

Where (and how often) do you access the Internet (and/or email)?	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Now & then	Never
Home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School/Tertiary institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cybercafé	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Library/Community centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mobile device	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Which statement best describes your use of new technology?

I buy new technologies as soon as they become available.

I'll get it once I can see that it will be useful.

I'll get it once it is used by a lot of people.

I avoid buying technology products.

In what year did you first use a computer?

In what year did you first use the Internet?

What best describes you as a user of computers?

I'm an expert user

I'm an experienced user

I'm not very experienced

I don't use them at all

What might encourage you to use the Internet more (select all that apply) ?

When it costs less to use

When access is easier

It was less complicated to use

My information was more secure

I understood computers better

When there is less threat of viruses on my computer

I'm using it as much as I need

Other (please specify):

How often do you use the Internet?	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Now & then	Never
To keep informed/up to date	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To do research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
For education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To find health/medical information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To find out about my community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To access government services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To communicate with others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To support hobbies/interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To buy products or services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To pay bills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To book travel and accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To do my banking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
For entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

To play online games	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the Internet help keep you informed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Helps a lot	<input type="checkbox"/> Helps somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Makes no difference	<input type="checkbox"/> Doesn't help at all	

## B – You and Democracy

Do you believe the statement “whatever I say or do, I can’t influence government”?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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How would you describe your general awareness of political issues?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very aware	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat aware	<input type="checkbox"/> Not very aware	<input type="checkbox"/> No awareness at all
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Did you do any of the following in the last three years (the maximum time between elections) (tick all that apply)?

Attend a political meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Join (or renew membership) of a political party?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Actively canvass on behalf of a political party or candidate?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow a political issue or debate in the media?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discuss politics with friends, family or colleagues?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vote in a national election?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vote in a local election?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visit a political party’s website?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stand for political office?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attend a formal meeting of elected representatives (such as a council meeting or select committee)?	<input type="checkbox"/>

Which of the following have you used to find out about government or politics (tick all that apply)?

Websites	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internet newsgroups (such as nz.soc.politics)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internet-based discussion forum	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weblog (Blog)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online chat	<input type="checkbox"/>
Email newsletter	<input type="checkbox"/>
Email discussion list	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>

Which of the following have you used to make comments about government or politics (tick all that apply)?

Websites	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internet newsgroups (such as nz.soc.politics)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internet-based discussion forum	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online chat	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weblog (Blog)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Email newsletter	<input type="checkbox"/>
Email discussion list	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>

How many times did you contact an elected representative about a community issue in the last year?	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 or 2 times	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 to 5 times	<input type="checkbox"/> 6 or more times
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Have you made a submission to a local (city, district or regional) council in the last year?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; In person	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; In writing	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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If you answered yes above, did you make an <i>electronic</i> submission (tick all that apply)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; by email	<input type="checkbox"/> No; it wasn't available
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; via a webpage or form	<input type="checkbox"/> No; I chose not to
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; via SMS/Text messaging	

Have you made a submission to central government in the last year?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; In person		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; In writing		
	<input type="checkbox"/> No		
If you answered yes above, did you make an <i>electronic</i> submission (tick all that apply)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; by email	<input type="checkbox"/> No; it wasn't available	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; via a webpage or form	<input type="checkbox"/> No; I chose not to	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; via SMS/Text messaging		
How has your use of the Internet affected your awareness of topical issues?	<input type="checkbox"/> Made me much more aware	<input type="checkbox"/> No difference	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Made me somewhat more aware	<input type="checkbox"/> Made me less aware	
Has your use of the Internet affected your level of involvement in political activities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased it a lot	<input type="checkbox"/> Made no difference	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased it somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Reduced it	
Does the Internet help you to influence key decision-makers?	<input type="checkbox"/> Helps a lot	<input type="checkbox"/> No difference	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Helps somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Doesn't help at all	
What do you think eDemocracy involves?	Yes	No	Not sure
Online voting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emailing politicians	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emailing government/council officials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discussing issues with others online or by email	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making submissions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading submissions others have made	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reviewing policy documents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being informed through access to information and archives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Access a government service online	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improving access to information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensuring equal access to computers and the Internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Influencing decisions that affect your community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What else does eDemocracy involve (please state in your own words)?			

### C - Community Activity

Are you a member of one or more communities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
	<input type="checkbox"/> No
To what communities do you belong?	
In what ways are you active in these communities?	

Have you helped establish a community group?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No																																																																		
How often do you participate in community activities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely or never <input type="checkbox"/> Once a month <input type="checkbox"/> 2-3 times a month <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> More than weekly																																																																		
In the last month, how often have you visited or contacted your neighbours or nearby friends?	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> 1 or 2 times <input type="checkbox"/> 3 to 5 times <input type="checkbox"/> 6 or more times																																																																		
What community-related activities have you used the Internet for?	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Daily</th> <th>Weekly</th> <th>Monthly</th> <th>Now &amp; then</th> <th>Never</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Visit a similar community's website?</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Visit a local government website?</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Visit a central government website?</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>To research an issue?</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Look for information on funding?</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Contact the media about an issue or event?</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Publish information about your community on a website?</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Promote a community issue or event.</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Present a view that challenges a council/government statement or policy?</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Plan or manage activities in your community?</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Now & then	Never	Visit a similar community's website?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Visit a local government website?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Visit a central government website?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	To research an issue?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Look for information on funding?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact the media about an issue or event?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Publish information about your community on a website?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Promote a community issue or event.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Present a view that challenges a council/government statement or policy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan or manage activities in your community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Visit a similar community's website?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>																																																														
Visit a local government website?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>																																																														
Visit a central government website?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>																																																														
To research an issue?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>																																																														
Look for information on funding?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>																																																														
Contact the media about an issue or event?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>																																																														
Publish information about your community on a website?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>																																																														
Promote a community issue or event.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>																																																														
Present a view that challenges a council/government statement or policy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>																																																														
Plan or manage activities in your community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>																																																														
Do you use the Internet for anything else in relation to your community activity?																																																																			
Do you consider yourself to be a member of an online community?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No																																																																		
If you answered 'Yes' to question C9 above, what benefits do you feel you get from belonging to an online community?																																																																			
Have you developed a website for a community organisation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No																																																																		
What would encourage you to use the Internet more in your community or voluntary activities (tick all that apply)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Easier access <input type="checkbox"/> Lower cost (of access) <input type="checkbox"/> Lower cost (of publishing, such as hosting a website) <input type="checkbox"/> Having more computer skills <input type="checkbox"/> Able to see more value <input type="checkbox"/> Having more time <input type="checkbox"/> I'm using it as much as I need <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):																																																																		

## D – About you

Suburb & City/District you live in		
Suburb & City/District you mostly work in		
What is your main job?		
Age	<input type="checkbox"/> 18-24 <input type="checkbox"/> 25-39 <input type="checkbox"/> 40-54	<input type="checkbox"/> 55-64 <input type="checkbox"/> > 64
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	
Ethnicity (tick all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> New Zealand/Pākehā <input type="checkbox"/> Māori <input type="checkbox"/> European <input type="checkbox"/> Samoan <input type="checkbox"/> Cook Island Māori <input type="checkbox"/> Tongan <input type="checkbox"/> Niuean <input type="checkbox"/> Tokelauan <input type="checkbox"/> Fijian <input type="checkbox"/> Other Pacific Island	<input type="checkbox"/> South East Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Indian <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese <input type="checkbox"/> Other Asian <input type="checkbox"/> African <input type="checkbox"/> Middle Eastern <input type="checkbox"/> Latin American <input type="checkbox"/> Not stated <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____

## G – Questions and Comments

Are there any comments or questions that you would like to make?

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey. Your contribution to this research project is greatly appreciated. Please return the completed survey in the postage-paid envelope or by fax (09 817 1103).

If you would like to receive a copy of the research summary and/or you would be willing to consider taking part in the next phase of the research, please could you indicate this and provide your contact details in the space provided on page ii of the survey. All the information you have provided will be treated in confidence and you will not be identified in relation to the information that you have provided.

Once again, thank you for your time and cooperation.

**Andy Williamson**



## Appendix B – Online Survey

Start page: [www.edemocracy.co.nz](http://www.edemocracy.co.nz)

The logo for eDemocracy.co.nz, featuring the text "eDemocracy.co.nz" in white lowercase letters on a red rectangular background.

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[eDemocracy.co.nz](http://www.edemocracy.co.nz) > Survey

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The impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) in facilitating and influencing the democratic processes in Aotearoa/New Zealand: A Survey

**Kia ora, Talofa lava, Talofa, Fakalofa lahi atu, Malo e lelei, Bula vinaka, Kia orana, Dobra Došli, Namaste, Ni hao, Greetings!**

This online survey is part of a PhD research project being undertaken by [Andy Williamson](#) in the Faculty of Informatics and Communication at [Central Queensland University](#).

The survey will take you about 15-20 minutes to complete. You can stop the survey at any time and return to it later, if you wish. The survey phase of this research is open to respondents aged over 18 who live anywhere in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

If you would like to receive a summary of the research findings when they are available, please ensure that you provide an email address at the end of the survey. The second part of the research, following on from the survey, will focus on local issues within Waitakere City. If you live, work or volunteer in Waitakere City and would be willing to be interviewed for the next part of the research, you can indicate this the end of the survey.

Thank you for your assistance and for taking the time to complete this survey. Before proceeding, please read the information for research participants below. This contains important information on the research. Once you have read this information, you can start the electronic survey by clicking the button at the bottom of this page or you can download a version to print out and complete by hand, if you prefer.

If you have any questions regarding any aspect of the research, contact details are provided [below](#).

Kind regards

Andy Williamson

## **INFORMATION FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

The aim of this research is to examine how computers and the Internet are being used to assist people to take part in and influence the democratic processes in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This research is being undertaken as part of a PhD by the researcher. It will consist of a national (New Zealand-wide) survey (this website), interviews with individuals and the observation of existing processes (such as meetings and electronic discussions). The study results will be used to learn more about the benefits and barriers to using ICT, to describe what is happening in local communities and to assist in the development of a model for electronic democracy and ICT that is grounded in the community.

### **How does this work?**

Your participation in this research is voluntary and any information provided by you will remain anonymous. You will not be identified in the results. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and you have the right to refrain from answering any question, if you wish to do so.

You can chose whether or not to participate.

### **What will I do?**

The information you provide will be analysed to find out how computers and the Internet are being or could be used to influence the democratic processes in Aotearoa/New Zealand. You will be able to receive feedback from the research in the form of a summary of the data collected. Information obtained during the study will be presented in a PhD thesis and might also be published in research papers or through appropriate community outlets. The data collected for this project is subject to the University's Code of Conduct and the requirement that all data relating to the research project be retained for a period of five years.

### **Your Permission**

Your consent is needed to confirm your involvement. You will be asked to indicate that you give your consent when you begin the survey.

You can withdraw from the project at any time and doing so will not affect your public or community standing. Should you wish to withdraw from the project please write, telephone or email the Principal Supervisor at the address shown below.

You are free not to answer specific questions within the survey should you choose.

## Confidentiality

All information you provide will be treated as confidential, which means that it will not be passed on to anyone else in any way that could identify you. The information received from you will be stored on a computer and will only be accessible through the use of a password or in a locked and secure cabinet.

## Information and Concerns

If you would like more information about the project Or the Principal Supervisor of the study: you can write, telephone or email the researcher:

Andy Williamson

PO Box 60-517

Titirangi

Waitakere City

Aotearoa/New Zealand

Phone: 09 817 1133

Email: [andy@wairua.co.nz](mailto:andy@wairua.co.nz)

Emeritus Professor John Dekkers

Faculty of Informatics & Communication

Central Queensland University

Rockhampton

Queensland 4702

Australia

Phone: 00-61-7 4923 2611

Email: [j.dekkers@cqu.edu.au](mailto:j.dekkers@cqu.edu.au)

*Please contact Central Queensland University's Office of Research (Telephone +61-7 4923 2607) should there be any concerns about the nature and/or conduct of this research project.*

## Definitions used in this survey

<b>Community</b>	A group of people having common interests or forming a distinct segment of society.
<b>Computer</b>	A personal computer, such as a PC or Macintosh, including desktop and portable (notebook) computers.
<b>Democracy</b>	Government by popular representation, where the supreme power is retained by the people but is indirectly exercised through a system of representation and delegated authority periodically renewed. The principles of social equality and respect for the individual within a community.
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technologies; means telephones, cellular phones, computers, the Internet, handheld computers, software and related technologies.
<b>Internet</b>	Connecting your computer to the Internet; this includes web sites, email, newsgroups, online chat etc.
<b>Online</b>	An activity or event that happens through using to the Internet.
<b>Politics</b>	The management of a political party; the conduct and contests of parties with reference to political measures or the administration of public affairs; the advancement of candidates to office.

Or download an Adobe Acrobat version of the survey to complete a printed copy (185K PDF) 



This research is supported by a Social Policy Evaluation  
and Research (SPEaR) Postgraduate Scholarship.

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[eDemocracy.co.nz](http://eDemocracy.co.nz) > Survey

## Page 1: Consent

### The impact of ICT on democratic processes

#### 1. Your consent

The impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) in facilitating and influencing the democratic processes in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

1. I agree to participate in this survey.
2. I have read and understood the information for participants (displayed on previous page).
3. I understand that the information gained during the study will be used within a PhD thesis and may be published.
4. I understand that I will not be directly identified by name in any publications.
5. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any stage.
7. I understand that I have the right to refrain from answering any questions should I so wish.
8. I understand that I may not directly benefit from taking part in the study and that I will not receive any payment for participating in this interview.
9. I understand that confidentiality is guaranteed.
10. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I will be provided with a summary of the results of the study before publication upon request.
11. The data collected for this project is subject to the Code of Conduct and the requirement that all data relating to the research project be retained for a period of five years, and be stored in a secure location, in a locked filing cabinet.
12. I confirm that I am over 18 years of age.

\* 1. I hereby agree to take part in this survey.

Yes

No

[Next >>](#)

## Page 2: Your computer and Internet use

### The impact of ICT on democratic processes

#### 2. Your computer and Internet use

Pages: **Computer use** | You and democracy | Community activity | About you | Comments and follow up

This section contains questions on how, when and why you use (or don't) use particular technologies.

#### 1. Where (and how often) do you use the Internet and/or email?

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Now and then	Never
Home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School/Tertiary institute	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cybercafe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Library/Community centre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mobile device	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### 2. Which statement best describes your use of new technology?

- I buy new technologies as soon as they become available.
- I'll get it once I can see that it will be useful.
- I'll get it once it is used by a lot of people.
- I avoid buying technology products.

**3. In what year did you first use a computer?**

**4. In what year did you first use the Internet?**

**5. What best describes you as a user of computers?**

- I'm an expert user
- I'm an experienced user
- I'm not very experienced
- I don't use them at all

**6. What might encourage you to use the Internet more (select all that apply)?**

- When it costs less to use
- When access is easier
- It was less complicated to use
- My information was more secure
- I understood computers better
- When there is less threat of viruses on my computer
- I'm using it as much as I need
- Other (please specify)

**7. How often do you use the Internet for the following?**

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Now and then	Never
To keep informed/up to date	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To do research	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To find health/medical information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To access government services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To find out about my community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To communicate with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To support hobbies/interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To buy products or services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To pay bills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To book travel and accommodation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To do my banking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For entertainment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To play online games	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**8. Does the Internet helps keep you informed?**

- Helps a lot
- Helps somewhat
- Makes no difference
- Doesn't help at all

[<< Previous](#)[Next >>](#)

## Page 3: You and Democracy

### The impact of ICT on democratic processes

#### 3. You and democracy

Pages: [Computer use](#) | [You and democracy](#) | [Community activity](#) | [About you](#) | [Comments and follow up](#)

This section of the survey will ask you questions regarding your political and democratic interests and activities, including your contact and involvement with national and local government.

**1. Do you believe the statement "whatever I say or do, I can't influence government"?**

- Yes
- Somewhat
- No

**2. How would you describe your general awareness of political issues?**

- Very aware
- Somewhat aware
- Not very aware
- No awareness at all

**3. Did you do any of the following in the last three years (the maximum time between elections) (select all that apply)?**

- Attend a political meeting?
- Join (or renew membership) of a political party?
- Actively canvas on behalf of a political party or candidate?



- Follow a political issue or debate in the media?
- Discuss politics with friends family or colleagues?
- Vote in a national election?
- Vote in a local election?
- Visit a political party's website?
- Stand for political office?
- Attend a formal meeting of elected representatives (such as a council meeting or select committee)?

**4. Which of the following have you used to find out about government or politics (select all that apply)?**

- Websites
- Internet newsgroups (such as nz.soc.politics)
- Internet based discussion forum
- Weblog (Blog)
- Online chat
- Email newsletter
- Email discussion list
- Other (please specify)

**5. Which of the following have you used to make comments about government or politics (select all that apply)?**

- Websites
- Internet newsgroups (such as nz.soc.politics)
- Internet discussion forum
- Weblog (Blog)

- Online chat
- Email newsletter
- Email discussion list
- Other (please specify)

**6. How many times did you contact an elected representative about a community issue in the last year?**

- None
- 1 or 2 times
- 3 to 5 times
- 6 or more times

**7. Have you made a submission to a local (city, district or regional) council in the last year?**

- Yes; in writing
- Yes; in person
- No

**8. Did you make an electronic submission (select all that apply)?**

- Yes; by email
- Yes; via a webform
- Yes; via SMS/Text messaging
- No; it wasn't available
- No; I chose not to

**9. Have you made a submission to a central government consultation committee or project in the last year?**

- Yes; in writing
- Yes; in person
- No

**10. Did you make an electronic submission (select all that apply)?**

- Yes; by email
- Yes; via a webform
- Yes; via SMS/Text messaging
- No; it wasn't available
- No; I chose not to

**11. How has your use of the Internet affected your awareness of topical issues?**

- Made me much more aware
- Made me somewhat more aware
- No difference
- Made me less aware

**12. Has your use of the Internet affected your level of involvement in political activities?**

- Increased it a lot
- Increased it somewhat
- Made no difference
- Reduced it

**13. Does the Internet help you to influence key decision-makers?**

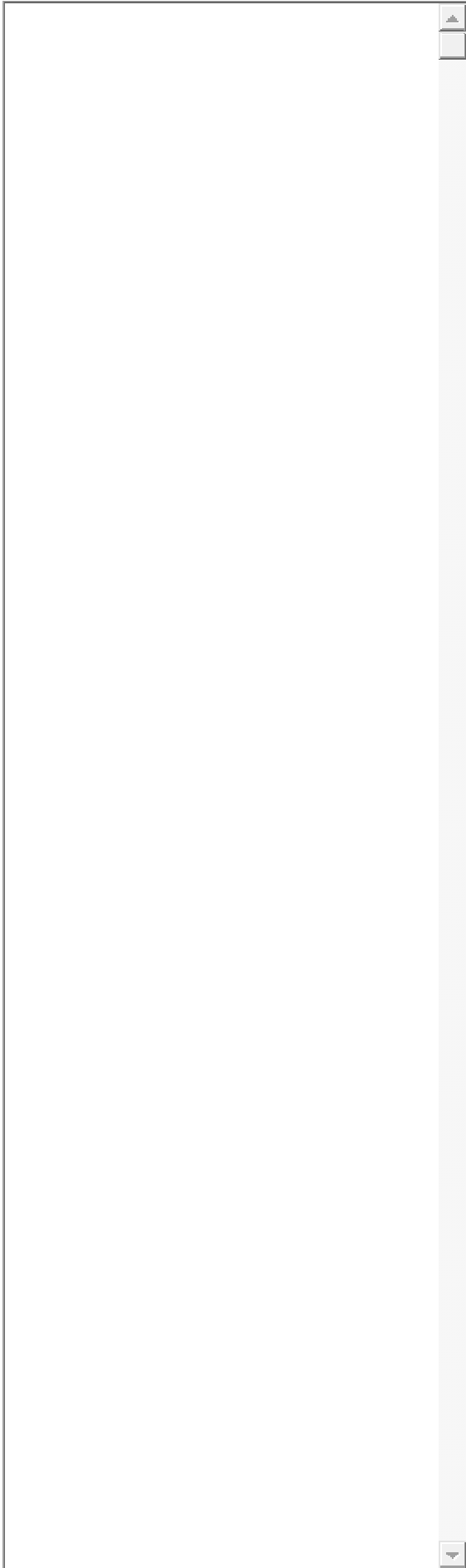
- Helps a lot

- Helps somewhat
- No difference
- Doesn't help at all

**14. What do you think eDemocracy involves?**

	Yes	No	Not sure
Online voting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emailing politicians	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emailing government/council officials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discussing issues with others online or by email	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making submissions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading submissions others have made	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reviewing policy documents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accessing government services online	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being informed through access to information and archives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improving access to information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensuring equal access to computers and the Internet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Influencing decisions that affect your community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**15. What else does eDemocracy involve (please state in your own words)?**



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[Next >>](#)

## Page 4: Community Activity

### The impact of ICT on democratic processes

#### 4. Community activity

Pages: Computer use | You and democracy | **Community activity** | About you | Comments and follow up

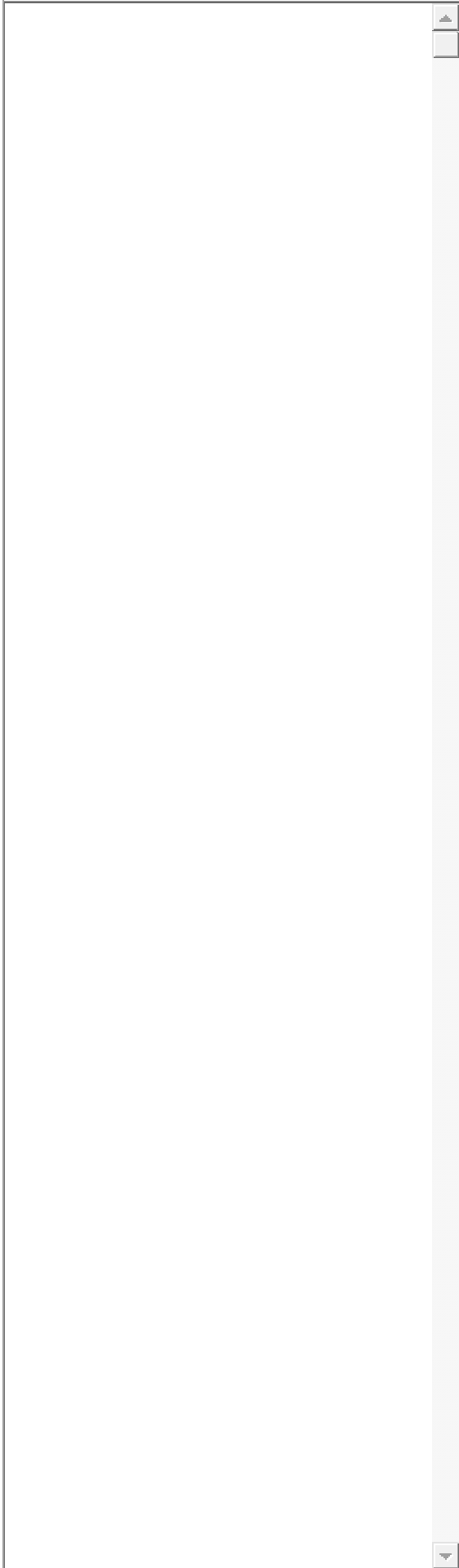
This page will ask you questions about your involvement in your local community.

##### 1. Are you a member of one or more communities?

Yes

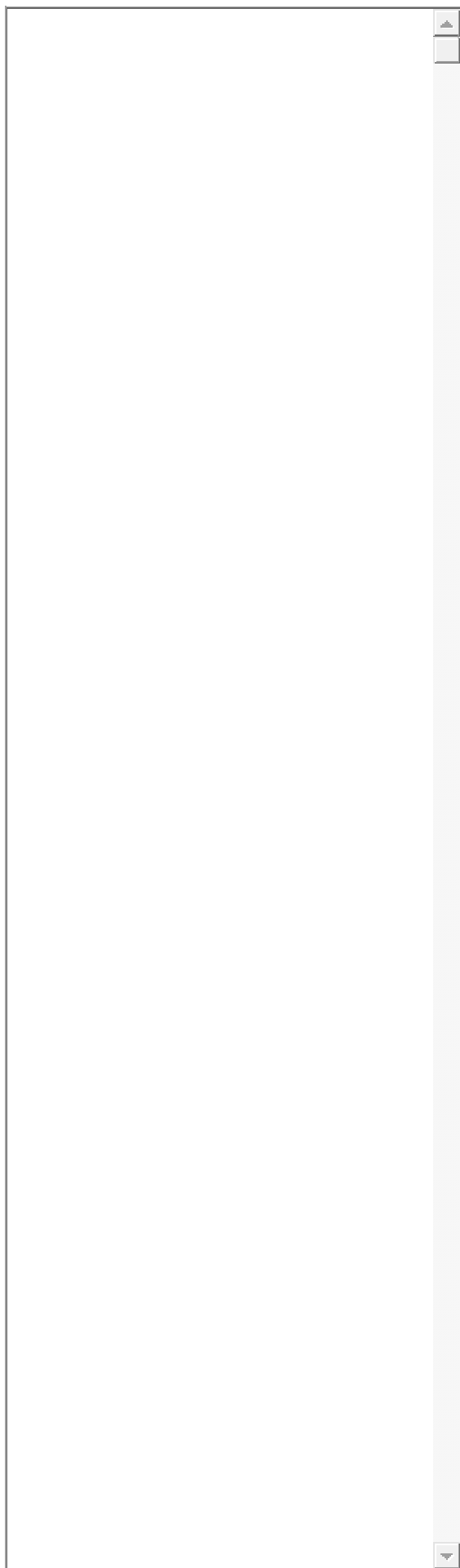
No

##### 2. To what communities do you belong?



**3. In what ways are you active in these communities?**





**4. Have you helped establish a community group?**

- Yes
- No

**5. How often do you participate in community activities?**

- Rarely or never
- Once a month
- 2-3 times a month
- Weekly
- More than weekly

**6. In the last month, how often have you visited or contacted your neighbours or nearby friends?**

- None
- 1 or 2 times
- 3 to 5 times
- 6 or more times

**7. How often have you used the Internet to do the following to support your community activities?**

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Now and then	Never
Visit a similar community's website?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visit a local government website?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Visit a central government website?

To research an issue?

Look for information on funding?

Contact the media about an issue or event?

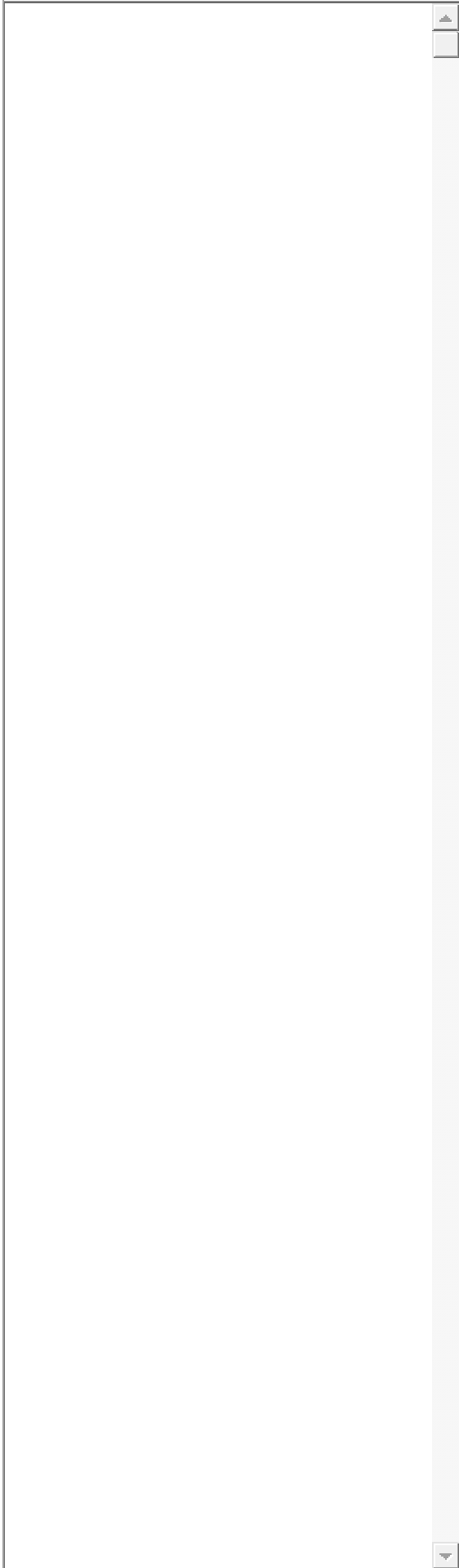
Publish information about your community on a website?

Promote a community issue or event.

Present a view that challenges a council/government statement or policy?

Plan or manage activities in your community?

**8. Do you use the Internet for anything else in relation to your community activity?**

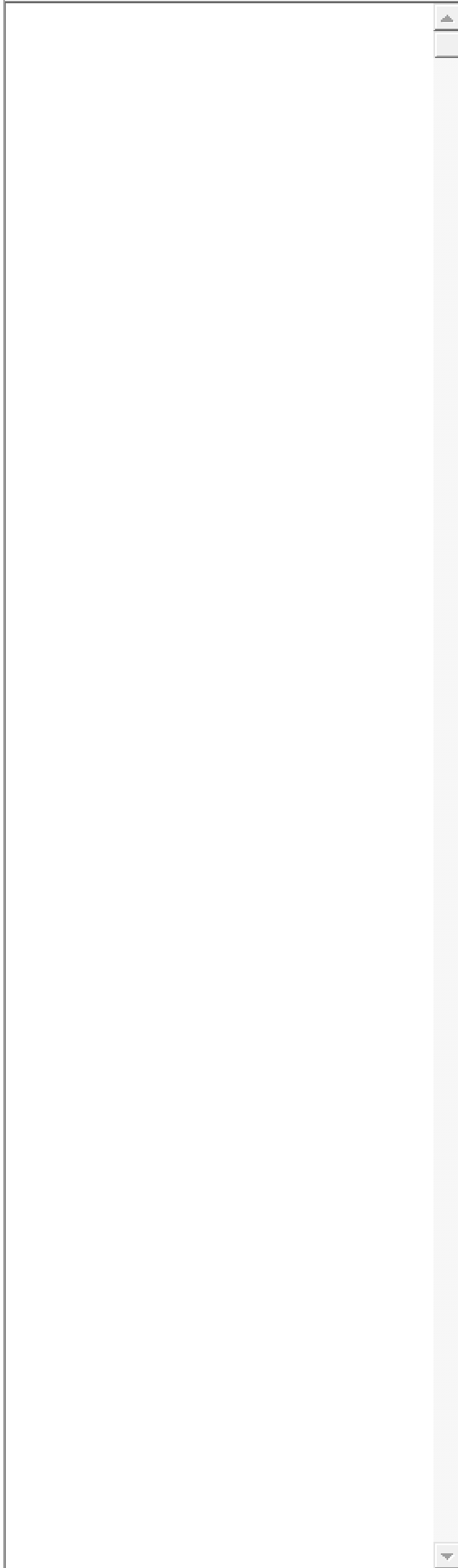


**9. Do you consider yourself to be a member of an online community?**

No

Yes

**10. If you do consider yourself to be a member of an online community, what benefits do you feel you get from belonging?**



**11. Have you created a website for a community organisation?** Yes No**12. What would encourage you to use the Internet more to publish information about your community or a voluntary organisation that you're involved with (select all that apply)?** Having more time Able to see more value Having more computer skills I'm using it as much as I need to Lower cost (of publishing, such as hosting a website) Lower cost (of access) Easier access Other (please specify)[<< Previous](#)[Next >>](#)

## Page 5: About you

### The impact of ICT on democratic processes

#### 5. About you

Pages: **About you** | Computer use | Political involvement | Community activity | Publishing information | Comments and follow up

This page asks you for some demographic information about you. This will be used to

compare your responses with information from sources such as the New Zealand Census.  
Please feel free to leave blank any questions that you are not comfortable answering.

**1. Which suburb and city/district do you live in?**

**2. Which suburb and city/district do you mostly work in?**

**3. Age?**

18-24

25-39

40-54

55-64

> 64

**4. Gender?**

Female

Male

**5. Ethnicity (tick all that apply)?**

New Zealander/Pakeha

Maori

European

Samoan

Cook Island Maori

Tongan

Niuean

Tokelauan



- Fijian
- Other Pacific Island
- South East Asian
- Indian
- Chinese
- Other Asian
- African
- Middle Eastern
- Latin American
- Not stated
- Other (please specify)

**6. What is your primary occupation?**

[<< Previous](#)      [Next >>](#)

## Page 6: Comments and Follow up

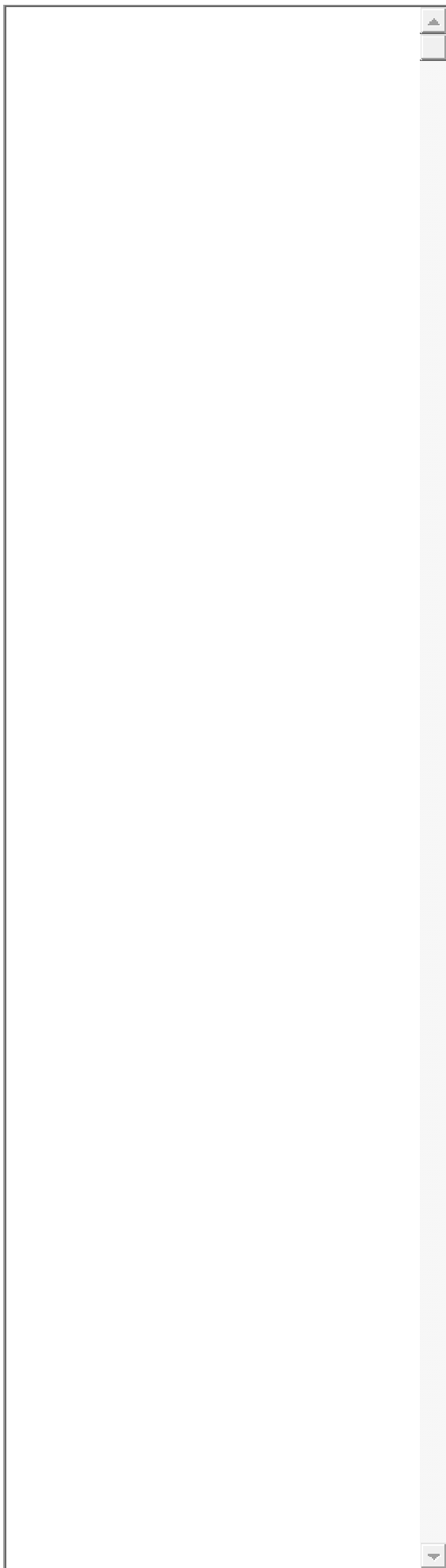
### The impact of ICT on democratic processes

#### 6. Comments and follow up

Pages: Computer use | You and democracy | Community activity | About you | **Comments and follow up**

**1. The aim of this research is to examine how computers and the Internet are being used to assist people to take part in and influence the democratic processes.**

**Are there any comments or questions that you would like to make?**



**2. Would you like to receive a summary of this research when it is available?**

Yes

No

**3. The second part of this research will involve interviewing people involved in community and political activities in Waitakere City. Interviews will last for approximately one hour.**

**If you live, work or volunteer in Waitakere City, would you be willing to take part in an interview as part of this research project?**

Yes

No

**4. If you indicated that you would like to receive a summary of this research and/or that you would be willing to take part in the next phase of this research, please could you provide your email address to allow the researcher to contact you:**

[<< Previous](#)

[Done >>](#)

**Redirect page: [www.edemocracy.co.nz/thanks.htm](http://www.edemocracy.co.nz/thanks.htm)**

**eDemocracy.co.nz**

---

eDemocracy.co.nz > survey > thank you

---

**The impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) in facilitating and influencing the democratic process in Aotearoa/New Zealand**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your time and input is greatly appreciated.

If you requested a summary of the research finding, these will be emailed to you once they become available. If you agreed to take part in the next phase of the research, I will contact you shortly to discuss this further.

Thank you once again for your contribution.

**Andy Williamson**

[Go back to the information for participants/start page...](#)

---

[eDemocracy.co.nz](#) > [survey](#) > [thank you](#)

## **Appendix C – Information sheet and informed consent: Interviews**

### **The impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) in facilitating and influencing the democratic process in Aotearoa/New Zealand**

#### **INFORMATION FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS**

Kia ora! Thank you agreeing to take part in this research. The purpose of the research is to examine how computers and the Internet are being used by people to take part in and influence democratic processes in regional communities. This research is being undertaken as part of my PhD in the Faculty of Education and Creative Arts at Central Queensland University. The first part of the research (which is now complete) consisted of a survey. This is the second part of the research and it consists of in-depth interviews with people like yourself who are involved in some aspect of the use of technology in a community setting in Waitakere City. The results will be used to describe the process and provide a model to help achieve the benefits and to overcome the barriers to using ICT at a local community level.

Thank you for your assistance with this research.

**Andy Williamson**

#### **Information about the Research**

Your participation in this research is voluntary and the information provided remains anonymous. Unless you agree otherwise, you will not be identified in the results. You can withdraw from the study at any time and you can refrain from answering any question.

The interviews will be recorded and written notes will be taken. These will then be analysed and, if you wish, you can receive a copy of these notes in the form of a summary so that you can comment on them and make corrections. The information obtained will be presented in a PhD thesis and might be published in research papers or through appropriate community outlets. The data collected for this project is subject to the University's Code of Conduct and the requirement that it be retained for a period of five years. It will be stored on a computer accessible only with the use of a password or in a locked and secure cabinet.

If you would like more information about the project you can write, telephone or email the researcher:

Andy Williamson

PO Box 60-517

Titirangi

Waitakere City

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## Definitions Useful for this Interview

<b>Community</b>	A group of people having common interests or forming a distinct segment of society.
<b>Computer</b>	A personal computer, such as a PC or Macintosh, including desktop and portable (notebook) computers.
<b>Democracy</b>	Government by popular representation, where the supreme power is retained by the people but is indirectly exercised through a system of representation and delegated authority periodically renewed. Includes principles of social equality and respect for the individual within a community.
<b>eDemocracy</b>	The electronic process through which citizens engage with government and its agents (and vice versa), including lobbying, consultation and voting. eDemocracy is a two-way process that can be driven by either government or citizens.
<b>eGovernment</b>	The provision of information, transactions and services between government agencies and from government to citizens and businesses. eGovernment encapsulates the electronic delivery of government 'business' from the centre out.
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technologies; means telephones, cellular phones, computers, the Internet, handheld computers, software and related technologies.
<b>Internet</b>	Connecting your computer to the Internet, including web sites, email, newsgroups, online chat etc.
<b>Online</b>	An activity or event that happens through using the Internet.
<b>Politics</b>	The management of a political party; the conduct and contests of parties with reference to political measures or the administration of public affairs; the advancement of candidates to office.

## CONSENT FORM

Your consent in writing is needed to confirm your involvement in the research. Signing this form means that you have agreed to be a part of the research but does not stop you from changing your mind at a later time. You can withdraw from the research at any time and doing so will not affect your public or community standing. To withdraw from the research please contact the Principal Supervisor at the address above.

I \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ confirm that:



1. The nature and the purpose of the study have been explained to me and I agree to participate.
2. I understand that the information obtained from the study will be used within a PhD thesis and may be published.
3. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any stage.
4. I understand that I have the right to refrain from answering any questions should I so wish.
5. I understand that I may not directly benefit from taking part in the study and that I will not receive any payment for participating in this research.
6. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I will be provided with a summary of the results of the study before publication if I request them.
7. The data collected for this research is subject to the Code of Conduct of the University and the requirement that all data relating to the research be retained for a period of five years, and be stored in a secure location, in a locked filing cabinet.
8. I confirm that I am over 18 years of age.

And further, regarding the anonymity and confidentiality of the information that you provide, please choose one of the following by ticking the appropriate response:

- I do not wish to be directly identified in any way in any publications and request that my confidentiality be guaranteed.
- I am happy to be identified by name or role in publications that result from this research.

**Signature of**

**participant:**

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Please complete this consent form and have it with you at the interview; I will need to collect this from you.**

## Appendix D – Interview questions

It is expected that your interview will last for about one hour. The format chosen for these interviews is semi-structured; in other words, I have a set of broad questions to ask you but it is anticipated that these will lead to other questions and that the conversation is not restricted to these questions. To help you to be ready for the interview, the *indicative* questions that I wish to ask are set out below:

1. What do you understand the term ‘Information and Communication Technologies’, or ‘ICT’ to mean?
2. What is your own level of knowledge and use of ICT?
3. Can you think of times when using ICT has been empowering, liberating, inconsequential or frustrating for you?
4. What do you understand the term ‘eDemocracy’ to mean?
5. What is your level of awareness of eDemocracy?
6. What effect do you think eDemocracy will have on the following (and why):
  - a. Elected representatives (in parliament and local authorities)
  - b. Civil servants
  - c. Individuals
7. What do you think are the advantages of eDemocracy:
  - d. For government activities?
  - e. For community activities?
8. In terms of making eDemocracy happen, what do you consider to be the role of:
  - f. Central government
  - g. Local government
  - h. Community-based groups
  - i. Individuals
9. Have you ever talked about community ICT projects or eDemocracy with people that you know? If so, how would you summarise their knowledge and feelings about this?
10. Can you think of any downsides or negative aspects of eDemocracy, including barriers or difficulties with eDemocracy working in New Zealand?
11. The government has just released its Digital Strategy.
  - j. Are you aware of this document?
  - k. Have you read it?
  - l. Did you read the draft strategy (published in 2004)?

- m. Did you make a submission?
  - n. Do you think that the Digital Strategy can help increase awareness of and use of eDemocracy in New Zealand?
  - o. What do you think are the roles of government, local authorities, communities, individuals and business in making the Digital Strategy happen?
12. Are there any initiatives that you're aware of either at a community, local government or central government level that will affect the potential for eDemocracy. If so, what are they and what is their impact or effect?
  13. Can you suggest who else I might talk to about eDemocracy (in particular, anyone who lives or works in Waitakere City)?
  14. Are there any other matters that you would like to raise at the interview?

## Appendix E – Publications Arising from this Research

- Williamson, A. (In press). Reclaiming democracy through digital participation. e-Government Annual Report. State Services Commission, New Zealand Government.
- Williamson, A. (under review). Using mixed methods to discover emergent patterns of local eDemocracy. *AI & Society*.
- Williamson, A. (2007). Speaking out, being heard: An emergent online model for community participation in local democracy. In L. S. G. Johanson (Ed.), *Constructing and Sharing Memory: Community Informatics, Identity and Empowerment* (pp. 352-366). Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Williamson, A. (2007, November 8). *Digital islands: A New Zealand perspective on government and society in the information age (Plenary)*. National e-Democracy Conference. London, UK.
- Williamson, A. (2007, November 5-7). *Empowering communities to action: Reclaiming local democracy through ICT*. Paper presented at the Community Informatics Research Network Conference, Prato, Italy.
- DeSouza, R. & Williamson, A. (2007, June 18). *Creating online spaces to connect, interact and support 'ethnic' communities in New Zealand*. Manchester Metropolitan University Public Lecture Series.
- DeSouza, R. & Williamson, A. (2007, June 12-13). *Harnessing the internet to expand the discourses of national identity*. Centre for Research on Nationalism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism, University of Surrey.
- Williamson, A. (2006, Oct 7-11). *Disruptive spaces and transformative praxis: Reclaiming community voices through electronic democracy*. Paper presented at the Community Informatics Research Network Conference, Prato, Italy.
- Williamson, A. (2006, May 26). *The internet as a tool for democratic renewal*. Paper presented at the Future of local governance and democracy in New Zealand, Manukau City, NZ.
- Williamson, A., & Edwards, R. (2006, May 1-2). *Building a platform for tomorrow's Digital City*. Paper presented at the Connecting Up 06 Conference, Adelaide, SA.
- Williamson, A. (2006). Balancing the inequalities of information access. *eGov India*, 2(8).
- Williamson, A. (2006). Important funding for community technology projects. *New Dialogue*. Dec.
- Williamson, A. (2005). Transforming democracy through ICT: An adoption model for community-led eDemocracy Practices. In S. Marshall, W. Taylor & Y. Xinghuo (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Developing Regional Communities with Information and Communication Technology*. Melbourne, VIC: Idea Group. (pp. 698-703)

- Williamson, A., & Dekkers, J. (2005). ICT as an enabler in the community and voluntary sector in New Zealand. In G. Irwin, W. Taylor, A. Bytheway & C. Strümpfer (Eds.), *Community Informatics Research Conference 2005* (pp. 408-429). Cape Town, South Africa: Community Informatics Research Network.
- Williamson, A. (2005, Nov 19). Electronic Democracy: The internet, community and democracy. Workshop at the Valuing voices: Democratic Dialogues Forum, Auckland, NZ.
- Williamson, A. (2005, Aug 12). *Community Informatics: The New Zealand Context*. Paper presented at the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute Seminar Series, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, NZ.
- Williamson, A. (2005, June 21). *What we've learned from community informatics research in New Zealand*. Paper presented at the Thematic Seminar on Community ICT Research, Victoria University, Wellington, NZ.
- Williamson, A. (2005). A review of New Zealand's Digital Strategy. *Journal of Community Informatics*.
- Williamson, A. (2004). Citizen-led engagement in democratic systems through the effective use of ICT. *Junctures: The Journal of Thematic Dialogue*, 2, 73-85.
- Williamson, A. (2004, Nov 22). *Reconstructing democracy, empowering community: The potential for electronic democracy*. Keynote address given at the School of Computing and IT Spring Lecture Series, Unitec, Auckland, NZ.
- Williamson, A. (2004). *Getting ready for eDemocracy: A five-stage maturity model*. Paper presented at the Australian Electronic Governance Conference, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, VIC.
- Williamson, A. (2003). Shifting the centre: The Internet as a tool for community activism. In S. Marshall & W. Taylor (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 5th International Information Technology in Regional Areas (ITiRA) Conference* (pp. 149-155). Rockhampton, QLD: Central Queensland University