Vilnius University
Kaunas University of Technology
Mykolas Romeris University

Democracy in Knowledge Society: the Analysis of Challenges and Possibilities

Priority trend: Citizens and Governance in Knowledge Society

Vilnius
2007

SUMMARY

The aim of the project is to identify the essential problems of the functioning of democracy in a knowledge society and to propose effective solutions using new information technologies.

Project activities:

1. Preparation of the feasibility study of electronic voting.
2. Creation of computer-aided voting assistance tools and analysis of its effect.
3. Creation of a tool for analyzing the performance of Members of Parliament.
4. Analysis of the role of ideology for the functioning of democracy and ideological weakness of Lithuanian parties.
5. Analysis of the quality of public discussions and factors determining the quality.
6. The analysis of popular political satire and ironic imagination.

Expected results

Scholar and technological production:

1. E-voting feasibility study;
2. Online smartvote voting assistance tool;
3. Instrument for analyzing the performance of Members of Parliament;
4. Methodical material "Citizens empowering through virtual discussion forums" for government institutions, NGO's, creators of internet discussion forums.

Forms of the presentation of the results

1. Seminar on "*Estonian experience of e-voting and feasibility of its introduction in Lithuania*"
2. Presentation of the results of the e-voting feasibility study (round table discussion)
3. Presentation of the website smartvote.lt for political leaders and the media
4. International conference at the end of the project on „Functioning of democracy in knowledge society"
5. Collective study "Making democracy work in knowledge society" (in Lithuanian and English)
6. Publications in academic Lithuanian and international journals
7. Paper in the annual conference at the Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius University on Parliament elections 2008.
8. Papers in ECPR Joint sessions in Lisbon (April, 2009), annual ECPR conference in Potsdam (September, 2009), and IPSA conference in Santiago (July, 2009).

PROJEKTO SANTRAUKA

Projekto tikslas – identifikuoti esmines demokratijos funkcionavimo problemas šiuolaikinėje žinių visuomenėje ir pasiūlyti efektyvius būdus joms spręsti, panaudojant naująsias informacines technologijas.

Numatomi darbai:

1. Elektroninio balsavimo studijos parengimas
2. Elektroninio pagalbos rinkėjams įrankio sukūrimas ir poveikio analizė
3. Kompiuterizuotos Seimo narių veiklos analizės įrankio sukūrimas
4. Ideologijų vaidmens demokratijos funkcionavimui ir partijų ideologinio silpnumo priežasčių analizė
5. Viešųjų diskusijų kokybės ir jos veiksnių analizė
6. Populiariosios politinės satyros ir ironiškosios vaizduotės analizė

Laukiami rezultatai

Mokslinė ir technologinė produkcija:

1. Elektroninio balsavimo galimybių studija
2. Smartvote pagalbos rinkėjams įrankis
3. Kompiuterizuotos Seimo narių veiklos analizės įrankis ir interneto portalas
4. Metodinė medžiaga „Piliečių įgalinimas per virtualius diskusijų forumus" valdžios institucijoms, NVO, internetinių diskusijų forumų kūrėjams

Rezultatų pateikimo ir viešinimo formos

1. Seminaras „Estijos elektroninio balsavimo patirtis ir jo taikymo galimybės Lietuvoje"
2. El. balsavimo galimybių studijos viešas pristatymas ir apskrito stalo diskusija
3. Smartvote.lt svetainės pristatymas politikams ir žiniasklaidos atstovams
4. Tarptautinė konferencija „Demokratijos veikimas žinių visuomenėje"
5. Kolektyvinė monografija lietuvių ir anglų kalbomis „Kad demokratija veiktų žinių visuomenėje" („Making democracy work in knowledge society").
6. Publikacijos periodiniuose Lietuvos ir tarptautiniuose mokslo leidiniuose
7. Pranešimas VU TSPMI metinėje konferencijoje :Lietuva po Seimo rinkimų 2008"
8. Pranešimai ECPR Joint Sessions Lisabonoje 2009 balandžio mėn., ECPR metinėje konferencijoje 2009 m. rugsėjo mėn. Potsdame, IPSA konferencijoje Santjage 2009 m. liepos mėn.

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

During last decades, deepening problems of democracy such as diminishing turnout, increasing dissatisfaction with political institutions, transformation of politics into political show are often discussed. These problems raise a question of the effectiveness and meaningfulness of the traditional democratic mechanisms in a contemporary society and stimulate the search of new forms of communication between citizens and the state using creatively the opportunities opened up by knowledge society.

The aim of the project is to identify the essential problems of the functioning of democracy in a knowledge society and to propose effective solutions using new informational technologies.

Objectives of the project:

1. To identify the main challenges the present democracy mechanisms encounter in knowledge society; to assess their scope and identify the essential sources of these challenges.
2. To examine the potential of electronic voting to increase electoral turnout as well as assess the possibility of introduction of electronic voting in Lithuania.
3. To present a complex of computer-aided voters assistance tools helping to identify voting preferences and analyze the practice of Seimas' members and political parties; to evaluate the potential of these tools to stimulate meaningful choices of voters as well as increase their activity in the present knowledge society.
4. To assess the significance of ideologies to successful functioning of democracy in knowledge society and define the sources of ideological impotence of Lithuanian political parties.
5. To assess the potential and preconditions of practical implementation of deliberative democracy.
6. To accomplish the discourse analysis of public deliberations (online public forums, commentaries, online consultations for citizens initiated by governmental institutions) as well as implement a public opinion survey with an aim to identify preconditions and factors of quality of public deliberation.
7. To evaluate functions of political satire, parody and irony in present society as well as assess their potential to spur critical civic reflection.

Potential users and interested organizations:

The project is oriented to the solution of practical problems and application of the solutions to improve the democracy mechanisms in Lithuania, therefore the spectrum of potential users in wide:

- Lithuanian citizens,
- Governmental institutions,
- Political parties;
- Non-governmental organizations;
- Lithuanian and foreign academic institutions.

TOPICALITY OF THE PROBLEM AND RELEVANT RESEARCH

Though we live in a period of postmodern knowledge society, governing institutions and political theories, that give a sense to them, still function in a theoretical framework of modern industrial society. Mechanisms of contemporary representative democracy emerged at XIX century. In other words, they are the product of industrial society. Universal suffrage, labour movements and mass political parties as well as trade-unions became a keystone for democratic system functioning nowadays. Its essential component was competition between ideological political parties, having mass membership and representing the interests of particular social stratum. This competition was based on mobilization strategies of "natural" social constituency rather than conversion[1]. This strategy caused strong partisan identification of the electorate and high electoral turnout. Parties used to be the major channel of communication between the state and the citizens, in other words, they served as a bridge, connecting state and society, and legitimating political regime.

As industrial society is displaced by postindustrial (or knowledge) society, these mechanisms face trouble. Debates about the crisis of political parties, decline of ideologies, decrease of partisan identification, the rise of populist parties, disappearance of public sphere, "mediazation" of politics and transformation into political show become popular in the West. Probably, the most concerning outcome of this transformation and erosion of democracy mechanisms is the decline of conventional civic participation (mainly voting) and political trust. These developments are directly related with the transformation of society from industrial to postindustrial or information society[2]: changes of social structure, increase of reflexivity (Giddens), individualism, emancipation, spread of self-expression values (Inglehart), increase of information flows, etc. On the other hand, these changes open new opportunities, especially using IT; that is why the discussions about participatory democracy, e-democracy, e-participation, deliberative democracy are becoming more and more popular.

Question is, whether and how it is possible to improve the quality of democracy using information technologies. Might they help to solve the problems of democracy mechanisms, or should we reconsider the major assumptions of the functioning of democracy in a postmodern society? May new technologies reactivate traditional mechanisms (for example, voting as essential element of democracy), or we should search for new means, new vital forms of involvement, that would guarantee effective implementation of democratic principles in a postmodern society?

These questions have crucial importance for Lithuanian society. Dysfunctions of democratic political process such as decrease of electoral turnout, party membership, distrust in government and democracy, political alienation are evident in Lithuania even more than in the West. Though this is often related to the specifics of post-communist country, similar trends in the West suggest that the roots of the problem are the same: inability of traditional democracy mechanisms to function in new conditions of postmodern knowledge society. Paradoxically, these tendencies and effects are even more obvious in Lithuania than in Western countries. Using the picturesque words of Arūnas Sverdiolas, "We were going our own speed and in some cases we went further than the others. (…) With the tail of an eye we notice how the West comes up slowly and gingerly, using a parallel road."[3]

---

[1] See Katz, R.S. and Mair P. (1995) Changing Models of Party Organisation and Party Democracy. *Party Politics,* 1(1): 7.
[2] About the concept of post-industrial and information society see Bell, D. The coming of post-indutrial society: a venture of social forecasting, New York: Basic books, 1973.
[3] Sverdiolas A. *Lėkštutėlė lėkštelė. Keli dabartinės Lietuvos viešosios erdvės ypatumai*. Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2006, p. 42.

Problems mentioned above – the decline of conventional participation, distrust in governing institutions and vulgarization of political content – were studied in Lithuania as well as worldwide. Decline of conventional participation was analyzed by Ramonaitė[4] and Riekasius[5], political alienation was studied in papers by Ramonaitė, Gaidys, and Valionis[6], transformation of politics to the communication game is analyzed Bielinis, Jokubaitis and others[7]. However, these studies do not suuggest practical solutions to the problem, or those proposals do not overpass the boundaries of traditional paradigm of politics[8]. Topic of e-democracy and e-participation remains almost unstudied field in Lithuania, except for several studies on e-government[9].

Studies, analyzing degree and reason of decline in political trust and support for political system[10], political participation[11], and party transformations[12] are popular in the West as well. Still, most of the authors analyze those aspects in isolation, without a look to the comprehensive context of social processes; moreover, they do not study practical possibilities of alternative mechanisms of democracy. Growing amount of e-democracy students mostly concentrates on formulating the problems, instead of answering the question what conditions would enable those mechanisms work and how it would be possible to solve the problems that democracy face[13]. It appears that researchers do not manage to be in time with actual processes in society, to assess opportunities they present and their impact, and to present reasonable recommendations.

[4] Ramonaitė A. Kodėl rinkėjai ne(be)balsuoja? In Žiliukaitė R., Ramonaitė A. et al. *Neatrasta galia: Lietuvos pilietinės visuomenės žemėlapis*. Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2006, p.92-112

[5] Riekašius, R. Konvencinio dalyvavimo krizė. *Politologija*. 2003, 3 (31): 38-58.

[6] Gaidys, V. (2004) Viešoji nuomonė ir politika. Kn. A.Krupavičius ir A.Lukošaitis (sud.) *Lietuvos politinė sistema*. Kaunas: Poligrafija ir informatika, 105-142.; Ramonaitė A. Piliečių ir valstybės santykis pokomunistinėje demokratijoje: politinio susvetimėjimo Lietuvoje analizė. Daktaro disertacija. Vilnius: Vilniaus universitetas, 2005; Ramonaitė, A. *Posovietinės Lietuvos politinė anatomija*. Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2007, 183 p.; Valionis, A. Socialinės ir politinės vertybės. Kn. *Europa ir mes*. Vilnius: Gervelė, 2001, 83-115.

[7] Bielinis, L. Šou principų dėsningumai Lietuvos politiniame gyvenime. *Politologija*. 2002/1 (25): 22-40.; Bielinis L. (ed.) Politika kaip komunikacinis žaidimas. Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2004.

[8] See e.g. Žiliukaitė R., Ramonaitė A. et al. *Neatrasta galia: Lietuvos pilietinės visuomenės žemėlapis*. Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2006.

[9] Barcevičius, E. Plus ca change: "Ar e-valdžia pagerins viešąjį valdymą Lietuvoje?", Politologija, 2006; Limba, T. Elektroninės valdžios įgyveninimo ypatmai Lietuvoje: visuomenės ir valdžios ryšys**. Informacinės technologijos 2006, 95-99; Limba T. Elektroninės valždiso priemonių įtaka viešosios vertės priemonių didinimui. Viešoji politika ir administravimas. 2004, 10: 65-69; Limba T. ir Petrauskas R. Visuomenės ir valdžios bendravimo internetu kokybės aspektai Lietuvoje. Viešoji politika ir administravimas. Nr 7.Vilnius, LTU – 2004. P. 89-93.

[10] Dalton R. (2004) *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices. The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Pharr S. and Putnam R. (eds.) (2000). *Disaffected Democracies: What's Troubling the Trilateral Countries?* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press; Norris P. (ed.) *Critical Citizens. Global Support for Democratic Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

[11] Norris, P. (2002). *Democratic Phoenix: Reinventing Political Activism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, Putnam, R. (2000) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Singapore: Simon and Schuste.

[12] See e.g. Dalton R. and Wattenberg M. (eds.) *Parties Without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

[13] For the successful examples see B.N.Hague and B.N.Loader (eds.) „Digital Democracy", Routledge, 1999; A.Wilhelm „Democracy in the Digital Age", Routledge, 2000.

This project is innovative and perspective because it strives for identifying the reasons of problems of democracy in Lithuania, examining the opportunities of new practical mechanisms for democratic functioning, for evaluating their significance and possible risks. This study will bring solid background for further improvement of the quality of democracy in Lithuania, and it will enable appropriate reaction to contemporary challenges and new initiatives like e-voting, etc. Furthermore, it will let Lithuanian scholars enter a new and still developing research area. With interdisciplinary theoretical background and solid results of empirical research they might become leading scholars of the perspective research area.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND TIMETABLE

1. THE ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ELECTIONS AS THE CORE INSTITUTION OF DEMOCRACY

Election is one of the most important institutions of representative democracy. It enables citizens' participation in the governing of the state through the elected representatives. However, the current trends - such as diminishing voter turnout that is generally explained by the lack of meaningful choice caused by the transformation of party competition – raises a doubt about the purpose of the institution of elections. During the project, the question if and how the application of new information technologies could revitalize the institution of elections (to increase turnout, to create favorable conditions and tools enabling a voter to orient himself in a market of candidates to representative institutions) and if the preconditions that ensure the meaningfulness of elections are still present will be answered.

1.1. Electronic voting feasibility study

One of the most popular suggestions for solving the problem of declining participation in the elections is the idea of electronic voting. The supporters of electronic voting in Lithuanian have already gathered 13 000 signatures under the electronic petition, which asks for installing the internet voting in Lithuania (see http://www.culture.lt/e-balsavimas/). Lithuanian Parliament confirmed the conception of internet voting in elections and referendums in November 2006. Moreover, the example of Estonia, which was the first country to introduce internet voting during the parliament elections, will certainly promote this idea before the forthcoming parliament elections in Lithuania. Despite the attraction of this idea there are a lot of arguments against the internet voting as destroying the foundations of democracy (e.g. deprivation of the possibility publicly observe the elections), there are a lot of technical and security questions which have to be discussed and need professional examination. The short review is made by the *Institute of Democratic Politics,* although the comprehensive analysis is lacking. During the implementation of this project the comprehensive analytical study of internet voting will be prepared cooperating with Estonian scholars.

1.1.1 The analysis of Estonian experience

The internet voting in Estonian gives the opportunity to analyze the possible consequences of such reform of election procedure not only theoretically, but assessing the practical experience. During the implementation of the project, the seminar will be organized, where Estonian scholars will present the Estonian conception of electronic voting, discuss technical aspects and consequences for the political system (effect on participation, public opinion, etc.).

1.2.1 Preparation of the electronic voting feasibility study

In the study the possibilities of introducing the electronic voting in Lithuania, potential benefits, costs and possible dangers will be evaluated. The study will be made on the grounds of analyzed Estonian experience as well as estimating specific Lithuanian needs (e.g. emigration and its consequences to declining electoral turnout) and readiness of Lithuanian population for such a reform, and considering the arguments of normative theory of democracy.

1.2 Creation of computer-aided voting assistance tools, and analysis of its effects

Political scientists and observers note that electoral campaigns in Lithuania are becoming propagandistic actions of public relations without the manifest struggle of ideas, values and program provisions. On the one hand, it is caused by the weakness of identity of the political parties, insufficient political knowledge of party members. On the other hand, substantive influence is made by the commercial interests of traditional media, television in particular, enforcing logics of show business on politics. These developments result in declining turnout and growing political alienation.

There are attempts to solve these problems with the help of new technologies, specifically the internet that enables the direct communication with electorate, fosters political education of politicians and electorate. Tools of electronic communication are especially favorable for involvement of the youth into politics.

During the project, using new informational technologies and professional knowledge, a free on-line tool measuring the political positions of the voters on the most important political questions and their congruence with the party/candidate position will be created. For that purpose so far the most sophisticated voter assistance tool based on issue-matching system - a *smartvote* tool - will be used. *Smartvote* is created by Swiss scholars and was offered in the elections in Switzerland and Bulgaria. The tool will be adapted for Lithuania, creating the questionnaire adequate to Lithuanian political situation. Also the analysis of the effects of the tool on the political process will be performed.

1.2.1 The creation of the website smartvote.lt and its arrangement for the Parliament elections in 2008, Presidential elections in 2009 and elections of European Parliament 2009.

Smartvote.lt will consist of three main elements: 1) a smartvote module with the issue - matching system; 2) comprehensive database providing information about the candidates running for office; 3) the analysis module with analytical tool for visualization of political positions. Smartvote was first used in Switzerland in 2003. The address of the website is www.smartvote.ch, and its English demo version can be found at http://smartvote-demo.politools.ch.

Analytical smartvote tool assist voters by offering systematized information about candidates and parties and providing voting recommendation based on the congruence of the answers between a voter and a candidate.

Smartvote analysis is based on three-step issue matching principle between candidates and voters:

1) Candidates answer a set of questions measuring positions on the major political issues;
2) Voters answer the same set of questions on the smartvote website;
3) Smartvote generates a list of candidates/parties that fit best to the voter's preference.

Adopting the tool for Lithuania, first, the most salient political cleavages and specific issues for every election will be identified. Second, the questionnaire for politicians and voters adopted for Parliament election 2008, President election 2009 and European Parliament election 2009 will be created.

1.2.2 Analysis of the impact of the electronic voters' assistance tool

During the project we will conduct an analysis of the effects of smartvote tool. Internet survey of the users will be carried out. It will reveal what social groups use smartvote most often, whether using smartvote tool increases the electoral turnout, and the interest in politics, if (and how) it modifies the preferences of an individual, etc.

1.3 Creation of a tool for analyzing the performance of Members of Parliament

One of the main problems of functioning of politics in knowledge society is the dominance and the usurpation of public sphere by mass media motivated by commercial interests. It is claimed that the media's heavy focus on the game of politics and negative news plays an important role in the worldwide growth of political cynicism[14]. This problem is of very high importance in Lithuania because of low quality of media and low readers' media literacy. The very logic of political process is distorted when a voter is not able to get impartial information about his representative since the media tend to present only negative information and scandals rather than analysis that would allow electing politicians according to their performance.

Development of the Internet opens up new opportunities for citizens to reach original sources of information avoiding commercial media (for example, websites of political parties, government institutions, "blogs" of politicians, etc.). However, surplus of information, which is a characteristic of knowledge society, prevent the effective using of these advantages. Searching information in sparse original sources requires too much time and attempt; that is why people still mostly choose commercial media.

Qualitative alternative for commercial media might be provided by instruments of performance analysis created by scholars. The instruments would process relevant information and present it in a systemized way. IT allows the creation of such analysis tools that would process information automatically, with minimal human intervention. An example of this kind of tool might be the computer-aided analysis and data visualization tools of voting in parliament, session attendance, etc., used in website idemokratija.info.

During the project, we will analyze the opportunities of monitoring of parliament member's performance, scrutinizing worldwide examples. Afterwards, we will create instruments for the analysis of members of parliament performance analysis as well as the instruments for the systematic and

---

[14] See Cappella J., and Jamieson K. (1997) Spiral of Cynicism: The Press and the Public Good. Oxford University Press.

effective presentation of the information. A website where voters could find systematized information on the performance of MPs will be created. The site will serve as a voter assistance tool enabling rational choice, as well as a tool for public control of the government.

1.4 Analysis of the role of ideology for the functioning of democracy and ideological weakness of Lithuanian parties

One of the most important problems of Lithuanian political system is the ideological weakness of parties. Removing value/ideological distinctions means removing politics itself. Then it is replaced by administration, which requires technical knowledge but is unable to mobilize citizens to participate in the governing of the state. Political party is the main agent articulating or generating different normative visions of politics. In Lithuania, however, parties do not offer any definite, inspiring and mobilizing ideologies. The question is, where are the roots of the problem: is it a result of Lithuanian political parties' immatureness and lack of experience, or we should consider this phenomenon as a symptom of society that refuse (traditional, inherited or copied) ideologies?

During the project the study of political parties will be implement in order to find out if the reasons of the ideological weakness of parties lie in the parties themselves, their organizations, their resources and (non)competence, or in the irrelevance of "available" ideologies for Lithuanian society. Or are they caused by the specific logic of the political game that discourages the generation of normative visions of the society. The purpose of the study is to implement an ethnographic research, combining different methods of social science: interviews with party leaders, observation of partisan activities (e.g. meetings), and party leaders' discourse analysis.

2. PRECONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

Democratic method of government origins from Greek city-state tradition of a way of managing public affairs. But its modern shape is a 19th century solution in how the principles of democracy can be applied in the conditions of industrial society. In recent decades this solution is often criticized. Political theory questions whether traditional mechanisms of democracy are enough to realize the main idea of democracy or should we look for more effective alternatives to electoral democracy. One of the most elaborated new theory of democracy - model of deliberative democracy – bring to the fore free and reasoned political debates as an essential principle of democracy. Discussion, reasoned deliberation of public affairs has importance in several aspects: a) it leads towards more rational political decisions; b) it increases political literacy of citizens; c) it increases social capital and mobilize for collective action; d) improves skills to deliberate *public* affairs, escaping selfish attitude.

2.1 The analysis of preconditions and factors of quality of public deliberation

Successful implementation of deliberative democracy requires (1) to involve citizens in deliberations of public affairs and (2) to guarantee the quality of deliberation. This research analyzes preconditions for qualitative virtual and life public debates.

During the project the following forms of public deliberations will be studied: 1) virtual forums of political discussions in Lithuania and successful examples in foreign countries, 2) comments on the internet; 3) non-virtual discussions: debates with candidates before the parliament elections; 4) online consultations with citizens initiated by government institutions on the most important strategic

documents of the sate (Long-Term Development Strategy of the State, National Lisbon Strategy Implementation Program, strategic documents on the use of EU support). The aim of analysis is to figure out what factors determine the nature of the rules of specific discourse (discussion, comment) and what mechanisms maintain the rules of rational, respectful discussion compensating for the effect of anonymity manifest through irresponsible, imprudent and disrespectful speaking.

To analyze the public deliberations, discourse analysis instruments will be applied and representative survey will be conducted in order to reveal: 1) why people do/do not involve in virtual or direct deliberations; 2) how do they perceive the different forms of deliberation: their aims, effectiveness, principles of debate. Special attention will be paid to the phenomenon of internet comments with the aim to figure out the audience (how many people comment and read comments, how they interpret the comments, etc.), the function of commenting, motives and effect of the comments.

2.2. Sources of civic reflection and criticism: analysis of popular political satire and ironic imagination

It is often claimed that contemporary mediated political discussion is deemed to non-rationality; therefore, despite of all opportunities opened up by new communication technologies, one should be sceptical about these opportunities when looking from the point of view of deliberative democracy model which is based on the ideal of rational discussion. However, one may question whether present political state of Lithuania can be properly assessed drawing on two criteria of modern industrial society: first, politics is not contemplated beyond the sphere of values, and political relations must be based on ideological distinctions; second, the relationship between a citizen and government must be direct (participation in elections, membership in mass political parties, etc.). However, present transformation of a general structure of political communication lacks proper attention and evaluation what urges a review of relevance of presented criteria. Citizen's experience and attitudes towards political life of the state develops in a multidimensional *public sphere* where *mass media* play an important role of a driver of societal communication and reproduction of political bonds. Here politics drifts towards the realm of media-driven publicity, and the mediated public sphere gradually becomes the centre of political life. Under these circumstances a classical conception of public sphere[15] needs a revision because it does not recognize heterogeneous nature of mass media-driven public life, the lack of clear divisions and distinctions between civic affairs, expressions of popular culture and interventions into privacy[16]. Likewise Lithuanian scholars' view that such phenomenon of de-differentiation causes only vulgarization of politics and degradation of democracy[17] raises doubts. Political significance and effects of new forms of political satire and parody saturated by mass media is not properly assessed. Therefore it is important to raise an issue whether and how present amorphous publicity generates alternative sites of stimulation of civic reflection and control of political power.

---

[15] Habermas J., *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society.* – Cambridge, Oxford: Polity Press, 1989; Habermas J., *Political Communication in Media Society: Does Democracy Still Enjoy an Epistemic Dimension? The Impact of Normative Theory on Empirical Research.* Communication Theory, 2006, nr. 16, 411-426.

[16] Crossley N., Roberts J.M. (sud.), *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere.* – Oxford, Malden: Blackwell Publishing/ Sociological Review, 2004.

[17] Baločkaitė R., *Pokmunistinis sąmoningumas Lietuvoje: senųjų paradigmų nuvertėjimas ir naujųjų raida.* Filosofija. Sociologija, 2003, nr. 4, 33-37; Baločkaitė R., *Postmodernioji galios epistema ir jos raiška Lietuvos viešajame diskurse.* Sociologija. Mintis ir veiksmas, 2005, nr. 1, 70-81.

During the project, the potencial of political satire, parody and irony as communication strategies to spur critical civic reflection and socio-political emancipation will be assessed building on the revision of the conception of post-modern public sphere and the theoretical models of the interplay of politics, popular culture and consumerism. By analysing Lithuanian TV political show "Dviračio šou" the following assumption is assessed: generally reputed as a playful and lightweight (non-political) discourse of the show plays a serious (political) role as long as it represents a malaise of a traditional public discourse (devaluation, discredit and fakedness) and lays a claim to control this malaise.

Moreover, a quantitative sociological survey and qualitative research (focus groups with ordinary citizens) will be carried out to estimate structures of popular interpretation and effects of the chosen media genre. The research aims to find out the reception of "Dviračio šou" and political impact, to assess how a Lithuanian citizen accepts the alternative style of political representation, what sense and meaning one gives to socio-political parody and satire, whether and how one links these meanings to one's political attitudes and values, political activity and support of government and democratic institutions. Holding a view that "Dviračio šou" is an expression of an alternative form of political communication, public survey also enables to examine a dominating view that imperatives of popular culture, aestheticisation and commercialization of public sphere makes society apolitical, prompts decline of control of political government and democracy degradation – cynicism of citizens, their apathy to and dissociation from collective affairs of political community.

TIMETABLE OF THE PROJECT

Activity	Year, month
Electronic voting feasibility study	
Seminar "*Estonian experience of e-voting and feasibility of its introduction in Lithuania*"	2007 10
Preparation of the e-voting feasibility study	2007 12
Presentation of the e-voting feasibility study / Round table discussion	2008 01
Development of computer-aided voting assistance tools and impact analysis	
Traineeship in Bern (Switzerland) for consultations concerning the smartvote voting assistance tool	2008 02
Adaptation of smartvote tool for Lithuania (preparation of the questionnaire for Seimas elections 2008)	2008 02-05
Programming of website smartvote.lt	2008 06-08
Presentation of the website smartvote.lt for political leaders and media	2008 09
Adaptation of smartvote tool for Lithuania (preparation of the questionnaire for Presidential elections 2009)	2009 01-03
Adaptation of smartvote tool for Lithuania (preparation of the questionnaire for European Parliament elections 2009)	2009 01-03
Survey of users of smartvote tool	2008 12
Presentations in annual conference, organized by IIRPS, "Lithuania after Seimas elections 2008"	2008 11

Development of tools for analyzing the performance of Members of Parliament	
Preparation of the conception of the tool for analysis of the performance of politicians	2007 12-2008 05
Programming of the tool for the analysis of the performance of politicians	2008 06-08
Party research	
Interviews with party leaders	2007 11
Analysis of party leaders' discourse	2007 09-11
Observation of the pre-election activities of political parties (before Seimas elections 2008)	2008 09-10
Analysis of factors determining the quality of public discussions	
Analysis of virtual public deliberations taking place in Lithuania	2007 09-12
Analysis of successful virtual public deliberations in foreign countries	2007 09-12
Analysis of political TV show „Dviračio šou"	2007 09-12
Research of reception of new media genres („Dviračio šou") – focus groups	2007 11-12
Representative survey of Lithuanian population (analysis of consumption of internet and TV information)	2008 01-02
Preparation of methodical material "Citizens empowerment through virtual discussion forums"	2008 04-05
Dissemination of project results	
International conference "Functioning of democracy in knowledge society"	2009 10
Preparation and publication of collective study "Making democracy work in knowledge society" in Lithuanian	2009 02-09
Preparation and publication of collective study "Making democracy work in knowledge society" in English	2009 05-11
Preparation of final report on project results	2009 11

EXPECTED RESULTS:

Scholar and technological production:

1. E-voting feasibility study;

2. Online smartvote voting assistance tool;

3. Instrument for analyzing the performance of Members of Parliament;

4. Methodical material "Citizens empowering through virtual discussion forums" for government institutions, NGO's, creators of internet discussion forums.

Forms of the presentation of the results

1. Seminar on "*Estonian experience of e-voting and feasibility of its introduction in Lithuania*"

2. Presentation of the results of the e-voting feasibility study (round table discussion)

3. Presentation of the website smartvote.lt for political leaders and the media

4. International conference at the end of the project on „Functioning of democracy in knowledge society"

5. Collective study "Making democracy work in knowledge society" (in Lithuanian and English)

6. Publications in academic Lithuanian and international journals

7. Paper in the annual conference at the Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius University on Parliament elections 2008.

8. Papers in ECPR Joint sessions in Lisbon (April, 2009), annual ECPR conference in Potsdam (September, 2009), and IPSA conference in Santiago (July, 2009).

Social effects

Introducing smartvote voting assistance tool for the Parliament elections 2008, European Parliament elections 2009 and President election 2009, the following social effects are expected:

- Increased voting turnout comparing with Parliament elections 2004, in particular in the 18-29 age group.
- Increased political literacy and ideological sophistication of party members.
- Increased interest in politics, in particular in 18-19 age group.
- Increased interest of media for ideological programmatic positions of political parties.

PREREQUISITES FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The main prerequisite of the successful implementation of the project is the scholar competence of the project promoters and project experience of responsible institution (Institute of International Relations and Political Science of Vilnius University) and partner institutions. The team is composed of representatives from the different scientific fields: political scientists, sociologists, philosophers, specialists of communication and public administration, and a mathematician. Interdisciplinary format of the team is one of the main preconditions for implementing the project. As different methods of research will be used, the team of project promoters is comprised in such a way, that all the specialists of those methods would be present: Professor dr. A. Krupavičius, dr. R. Žiliukaitė and dr. V. Morkevičius are one of the best specialists in Lithuania of statistical analysis, dr. I. Vinogradnaitė and dr. R. Baločkaitė are known specialists of discourse analysis and critical theory, dr. A. Ramonaitė has a great experience in qualitative research of political attitudes, dr. L. Nevinskaitė has an experience in analysis of media content, E. Barcevičius is experienced specialist of political analysis, dr. E. Butkevičienė is a specialist of internet surveys, dr. S. Norvaišas is a specialist of mathematical modeling.

The promoters of the project have a great experience in the fields important for implementation of this project. The scientific interests of dr. A. Ramonaitė include the topics of political participation, party cleavages, political alienation. Prof A. Krupavičius and dr. G. Žvaliauskas specializes in studies of parties and party systems, M. Kluonis is a specialist in analysis of voting behavior, dr. V. Morkevičius examines ideological manifestations in public discourse and works with the analysis of activity of parliament members in debates. Dr. A. Lukošaitis specializes on analysis of Parliament activities. The competence of these scholars will be very important in the implementation of the first part of the project - analyzing the efficiency of elections as the main feature of the representative democracy.

Research area of dr. Inga Vinogradnaitė includes analysis of public discourse and public sphere, while dr. Rasa Baločkaitė finds her academic interest in research of public consciousness. Dr. L. Nevinskaitė analyses the transformation of public sphere in Lithuania, specialization of J. Kavaliauskaitė focus on postmodern social theory and analysis of popular political satire. Experience of those scholars is very important for the second part of the project – analysis of Lithuanian public sphere and public discussions.

Qualification and experience of dr. Saulius Norvaišas will be an important contribution for the success of the project. His academic interest lies in modeling of social systems, impact of information technologies for social changes. Dr. Norvaišas is an organizer of an interdisciplinary "Seminars of the Future", where aspects of interface between society and new technologies is being analyzed. E-governance specialist E. Barcevičius and scholar of virtual communities dr. E. Butkevičienė will bring significant contribution in the study of e-democracy. As long as attention will be given for e-voting, participation of Priit Vinkel, specialist of internet voting, member of electoral commission of Estonia will play important role.

The purpose of the project is not limited to carrying empirical research; we seek to reconsider the assumptions of democracy functioning in contemporary society. Here crucial contribution will be brought by dr. A. Jankauskas, specialist of theories of democracy, and Prof. dr. A. Jokubaitis, one of the famous political philosopher in Lithuania, and D.Gudelis who is specializing in political philosophy and public administration.

Scientific expertise and experience of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science (Vilnius University)

VU IIRPS is an academic subdivision of Vilnius University implementing three-level consecutive university study programme of political science and carrying out scientific research.

A. Participation in projects:

During 2004-2006 scholars of VU IIRPS took part in 11 Lithuanian and international projects. Scholars of IIRPS are more active in projects financially supported by LSSSF. 4 LSSSF projects were carried out during 2004-2006.

Title of scientific programme	Title of the project	Period of the project	Leaders and members of the project	Partners of the project	*Financial assistance*
Lithuanian State Science and Studies Foundation (LSSSF)	Ethnic identity under globalization: ethical implications and paradoxes of democracy	2003-2006	J.Čičinskas, A.Jokubaitis, V.Radžvilas, K.Vaičiūnaitė	Culture, Philosophy and Arts Research Institute	*LSSSF*
Lithuanian State Science and Studies Foundation (LSSSF)	Lithuanian political parties: the analysis of structural and functional potential	2005	A.Jankauskas M.Degutis A.Lukošaitis A.Ramonaitė		*LSSSF*
Lithuanian State Science and Studies Foundation (LSSSF)	Strategy of Lithuanian foreign policy	2005	E. Motieka, V.Sirutavičius, J.Daniliauskas T.Janeliūnas		*LSSSF*
Lithuanian State Science and Studies Foundation (LSSSF)	Analysis of challenges of international anti-terrorist campaign: case of Lithuania	2006	E.Račius, V.Urbelis, D.Šlekys		*LSSSF*
The International Commission for the Evaluation of the Primes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania	Significance of historic memory for the establishment of civic society	2005-2006	K.Vaičiūnaitė, D.Jakniūnaitė, V.Jurkonis	The Centre for the Studies of the Culture and History of the East European Jews; European information Centre of Seimas	*The International Commission for the Evaluation of the Primes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania*
HESP project	Transformation of political institutions	2003-	K.Vaičiūnaitė,	University of	*Open Society*

	and political processes in post-communist states	2006	D.Jakniūnaitė	Yekaterinburg	*Institute, HESP Programme*
INTAS/EU project	A network of Eurasian political studies: the development of comparative studies on transformation of political regime in multicultural societies and the establishment of nation states in post-soviet realm	2005-2007	A.Jankauskas, K.Vaičiūnaitė, D.Jankniūnaitė, V.Volovoj	11 universities from Czech Republic, Great Britain, France, Lithuania, Russia, Armenia, Byelorussia, Kirghizstan and Ukraine take part in the project	*INTAS/ES*
PHARE project	Strengthening of cooperation of non-governmental organizations in the Baltic Sea Region: establishment of regional centre of Byelorussia	2005-2006	K.Vaičiūnaitė, V.Jurkonis	Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Lithuania (FMRL), the Finnish Institute of International Affairs	*PHARE*
PHARE project	Establishment of the network of the centre of Kaliningrad studies	2005-2006	K.Vaičiūnaitė	Klaipėda university (the principal member of project), FMRL, Research Centre of W.Ketrzynski (Poland)	*PHARE*
6 EU Framework Programme	Civic society and new forms of governance in Europe: the formation of European citizenship	2005-2009	A.Rauličkytė. I.Vinogradnaitė	Consortium of 40 EU and US universities	*6 EU Framework Programme*
EU development project	Prevention of doubts, fear and myths about the EU: purposive information for Lithuanian regions using the present infrastructure of the Lithuanian European information centre.	2005-2006	J.Čičinskas, R.Vilpišauskas, J.Daniliauskas	Public undertakings „European social, legal and economic projects", „Europe Direct (EIC-ED) in Lithuania"	*EU Commission*

B. Main branches of research:

- EU integration, external relations and institutional reform

- Trends of international relations development and geopolitical situation of Lithuania

- Political development of Eastern Europe

- Institutionalization of Lithuanian political system

- Methodological problems of political science

- Reform of public policy and public management in Lithuania

Scientific expertise and experience of the Institute of Politics and Public Administration (Kaunas University of Technology):

A. Participation in projects:

1. An international project „European Election Studies 2004, EUPROSPECT". An international coordinator is Hermann Schmitt, Mannheim (Germany), the national coordinator is professor A.Krupavičius. The project is carried out from 2003 to 2006.

2. A project „Accumulation and management of empirical data and information for humanities and social science (HSS) research: a Lithuanian archive of HSS data (LiDA)" financed under the instrument 2.5 "Improvement of human resources in the field of scientific research and innovation" of the priority 2 "Development of human resources" of the Single Programming Document of Lithuania (2004-2006); project no. BPD2004-ESF-2.5.0-03-05/0042, an agreement no. BPD2004-ESF-2.5.0-03-392/BPD-262/F450 BPD-262. The project is carried out from 2006 to 2008

3. A project implemented by the group of scholars and financed by the Lithuanian State Science and Studies Foundation "Ideologies and parties at the beginning of 21st century: does era of ideologies continue?"; an agreement no. T-06/06. The project is carried out in 2006.

B. Main branches of research:

1. Civic society, democracy and government
2. Political parties and party systems / development of multi-party system;
3. Elections and electoral systems;
4. Quality of democracy: institutions, functioning and challenges;
5. Discourse analysis and politics.

Scientific expertise and experience of Mykolas Romeris University:

A. Participation in projects:

Title of the project	Registration No. of application/ project	Source of funding (EU structural fund, international funding programmes, state budget, other sources)	Funding amount, Lt	Progress of project implementation
Development of innovations in the field of master and doctoral studies at Mykolas Romeris University (former Lithuanian Law University)	ESF/2004/2.5.0-K01-053/SUT-171	EU structural funds	2626987	*Underway 2nd March 2005 – 29th February 2008*
Social sciences in knowledge society: improvement of quality control system in Mykolas Romeris University (former Lithuanian Law University)	ESF/2004/2.5.0-K01-030/SUT-172	EU structural funds	804159	*Underway 2nd March 2005 – 29th February 2008*
PHARE – Social integration of convicts under alternative penalties in problematic regions	6537902-01-01-0008	Aid Fund for Programmes of Human Resources Development	229057	*Accomplished 1st October 2004 – 31st October 2005*
PHARE – Social integration and social economic development in the period of Lithuanian integration into the EU	LI0011-001-01-0009	Aid Fund for Programmes of Human Resources Development	195394	*Accomplished 1st August 2002 – 1st April 2003*
PUBLIN – Innovation in the public sector	SERD-2002-00171	EU funds	189258	*Accomplished 1st January 2003 – 1st January 2006*
EGG – Development and governance: civic and political activity of women	SERD-2002-000333	EU funds	98619	*Accomplished 29th November 2002 – 29 November 2005*
EQUAPOL –	SERD-2002-	EU funds	126787	*Accomplished*

Public policy: gender approach	00096				*1st November 2002 – 1st April 2004*
AEQUITAS – Trust Frame for Electronic Documents Exchange between European Judicial operators	IST-2001-38654	EU funds	195801		*Accomplished 1st August 2001 – 1st April 2003*
Social and political efficacy of self-government institutions	-	Lithuanian State Science and Studies Foundation	31000		*Accomplished March 2002 – December 2004*
Dynamics, forecast and control of crime in Lithuania, and modern conception of criminology		Lithuanian State Science and Studies Foundation	120000		*Accomplished June 2001 – December 2003*

B. Main branches of research:

1. Reinforcement of economic competitive ability, enterprise and social cohesion

2. Development of human resources: challenges to social policy

3. State of Law and social cohabitation in 21st century

4. Effective public administration

INFORMATION ON LITHUANIAN AND FOREIGN PARTNERS AND MEMBERS OF THE PROJECT

Institute of Politics and Public Administration
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
KAUNAS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Kęstučio str. 8-206, 44239 Kaunas. Tel.: (8~37) 30 01 15.
Fax (8~37) 30 01 02. e-mail pvai@adm.ktu.lt

MYKOLAS ROMERIS UNIVERSITY
Ateities str. 20, LT-08303 Vilnius
Tel. (8 5) 271 4647, Fax (8 5) 267 6000
e-mail roffice@mruni.eu

A LIST OF PROJECT MEMBERS:

No.	Pedagogic name and academic degree	Name, surname	Workplace (main office and avocations in institutions of scientific research and academic studies)	Other projects involving a participant and presented to/ financed by the Fund, (Article 40 of the schedule)
Leader of the project				
1.	dr.	Ainė Ramonaitė	Vilnius University (major office), Mykolas Romeris University (avocation)	„Unity of Lithuanian nation: history, present and future". Leader of the project: doc. dr. Stanislovas Juknevičius (Culture, Philosophy and Art Research Institute)
Project promoters				
2.	dr.	Inga Vinogradnaitė	Vilnius University	
3.	dr. doc.	Algimantas Jankauskas	Vilnius University	
4.	dr.	Rūta Žiliukaitė	Vilnius University	„Unity of Lithuanian nation: history, present and future". Leader of the project: doc. dr. Stanislovas Juknevičius (Culture, Philosophy and Art Research Institute)
5.	dr.	Laima Nevinskaitė	Vilnius University	
6.		Jūratė Kavaliauskaitė	Vilnius University (doctoral student)	
7.	dr.	Alvidas Lukošaitis	Vilnius University (avocation)	
8.		Egidijus Barcevičius	Vilnius University (doctoral student)	
9.		Mindaugas Kluonis	Vilnius University (doctoral	

			student)	
10,	prof.dr.	Alvydas Jokubaitis	Vilnius University	
11.	dr.	Vaidas Morkevičius	Kaunas University of Technology	
12.	prof.dr.	Algis Krupavičius	Kaunas University of Technology	
13.	dr.	Giedrius Žvaliauskas	Kaunas University of Technology	
14.	dr.	Eglė Vaidelytė	Kaunas University of Technology	
15.	dr.	Eglė Butkevičienė	Kaunas University of Technology	
16.	dr.	Rasa Baločkaitė	Kaunas University of Technology	
17.		Dangis Gudelis	Mykolas Romeris University	
18.	dr.	Saulius Norvaišas	Mykolas Romeris University	
19.		Priit Vinkel	Tallinn University of Technology	

Written consents by all project partners and promoters to participate in the project are included in Lithuanian version of the project.