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## Conceptual Evolution from Democracy to E-Democracy

### Abstract

This article aims to analyze the conceptual evolution from the traditional model of democracy to electronic democracy and the impact of information and communication technologies on political participation and governance processes. Democracy has historically developed as a fundamental form of political governance that ensures citizens' participation in state administration. However, in the modern era, the rapid development of information and communication technologies has created new opportunities for the functioning of democratic institutions and for different forms of citizen participation. In particular, the widespread use of the internet, the development of digital communication tools, and the emergence of online platforms have enabled more efficient and accessible interaction between the state and society.

The article comparatively examines the basic principles of traditional democracy and the concept of electronic democracy, and it also explores the influence of digital technologies on political communication, public discussion, and decision-making processes. At the same time, the expansion of citizens' opportunities to participate in governance through electronic participation, online voting, and digital platforms is evaluated. Within the framework of the study, along with the advantages of electronic democracy, challenges such as digital inequality, cybersecurity, data protection, and disinformation are also considered. As a result, it is emphasized that the development of information and communication technologies stimulates the emergence of new forms of democracy and contributes significantly to the formation of a more transparent, open, and participatory model of governance.

**Keywords:** *Democracy, electronic democracy (e-democracy), digital democracy, information and communication technologies (ICT), online political participation, electronic voting (e-voting), digital citizenship, open government, open data, digital transformation*

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## Demokratiyadan elektron demokratiyaya konseptual təkamül

### Xülasə

Bu məqalə ənənəvi demokratiya modelindən elektron demokratiyaya keçidin konseptual təkamülünü və informasiya-kommunikasiya texnologiyalarının siyasi iştirak və idarəetmə proseslərinə təsirini təhlil etmək məqsədi daşıyır. Demokratiya tarixən vətəndaşların dövlət idarəçiliyində iştirakını təmin edən əsas siyasi idarəetmə forması kimi formalaşmışdır. Lakin müasir dövrdə informasiya və kommunikasiya texnologiyalarının sürətli inkişafı demokratik institutların fəaliyyətinə və vətəndaş iştirakının formalarına yeni imkanlar yaratmışdır.

Xüsusilə internetin geniş yayılması, rəqəmsal kommunikasiya vasitələrinin inkişafı və onlayn platformaların meydana çıxması dövlət və cəmiyyət arasında qarşılıqlı əlaqənin daha operativ və əlçatan şəkildə həyata keçirilməsinə şərait yaratmışdır.

Məqalədə ənənəvi demokratiyanın əsas prinsipləri ilə elektron demokratiya anlayışı müqayisəli şəkildə təhlil olunur, həmçinin rəqəmsal texnologiyaların siyasi kommunikasiya, ictimai müzakirə və qərarvermə proseslərinə təsiri araşdırılır. Eyni zamanda elektron iştirak, onlayn səsvermə və rəqəmsal platformalar vasitəsilə vətəndaşların dövlət idarəçiliyində iştirak imkanlarının genişlənməsi qiymətləndirilir. Tədqiqat çərçivəsində elektron demokratiyanın üstünlükləri ilə yanaşı, rəqəmsal bərabərsizlik, kibertəhlükəsizlik, məlumatların qorunması və dezinformasiya kimi çağırışlar da nəzərdən keçirilir. Nəticə olaraq qeyd olunur ki, informasiya-kommunikasiya texnologiyalarının inkişafı demokratiyanın yeni formalarının yaranmasına təkan verir və daha şəffaf, açıq və iştirakçı idarəetmə modelinin formalaşmasına mühüm təsir göstərir.

**Açar sözlər:** *Demokratiya, elektron demokratiya (e-demokratiya), rəqəmsal demokratiya, informasiya-kommunikasiya texnologiyaları (İKT), onlayn siyasi iştirak, elektron səsvermə (e-voting), rəqəmsal vətəndaşlıq, açıq hökumət, açıq məlumatlar, rəqəmsal transformasiya*

## Introduction

The term "democracy" and its key characteristics must be explained in order to comprehend the theoretical framework of e-democracy. It is difficult to define democracy and what it ought to be. The Euro-American political model and the state structure in general are frequently associated with democracy. It is widely acknowledged that the city-states of Ancient Greece are the historical origins of democracy.

The word "democracy" has its roots in the Greek words "demos," which means "the people," and "kratos," which means "power" or "rule." The etymology of the word "democracy" means "rule of the people," indicating that the people are the source of all political power.

It is important to note that there are various forms or types of democracy as discussed in literature. C.F. Strong defines democracy as "a form of government in which the majority of adults are involved in the political process through a system of representation" (Strong, 1958). The main emphasis of this theory is on the principles of participation and representation.

Democracy, as defined by Abraham Lincoln, is "government of the people, by the people, and for the people" (Lincoln, 1863). Accordingly, the people are directly responsible for the legitimacy of democracy and its goals.

On the other hand, Aristotle related democracy with the freedom of citizens and their right to participate in political life (Aristotle, 1996). According to the author's theory, the relationship between the participation of people in the government and democracy is direct.

As argued by Soche, democracy entails a system of popular governance whereby the populace holds power and the ability to elect their representatives, influence government actions, and, if needed, implement changes (Soche, 1979).

On the basis of these interpretations, the phrase "vox populi vox dei," or "the voice of the people equals the voice of God," and the concept of democracy are related. One of the most important philosophical principles of democracy is the recognition of the popular will.

## Research

The approaches discussed above highlight the historical development of democracy as it responds to new sociopolitical environments. The approaches all agree that citizen participation is an essential value and that the source of political legitimacy lies in the people. The modalities of citizen participation have undergone a major transformation in recent times because of the rapid development of information and communication technology in the last quarter of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century.

The potential of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) having a significant influence on modern political processes was emphasized by political scientists and futurologists in the early 1960s. The first theoretical discussion on the subject was started by Marshall McLuhan in

his book in 1964. McLuhan argued that the new technologies could have a strong influence on politics and society (McLuhan, 1964).

Over time, the scope of the effect of ICT on political participation and political decision-making has grown rapidly, and the literature on the subject encompasses a wide range of both theoretical and practical dimensions. Among the most frequently used terms in this regard are the concepts of "electronic democracy" or "e-democracy" (Schaal, 2016), and also the term "digital democracy" (Hacker & van Dijk, 2000). In the past, the terms "teledemocracy" (Becker, 1981), "virtual democracy," and "cyberdemocracy" (Poster, 1997) had been used.

There have been several attempts to classify the historical development of e-democracy, its conceptual approaches, and its application as a result of the emergence of multidisciplinary studies and the development of multiple points of view. These studies have shown that e-democracy is not just the next step in the development of technology but also a new means of expressing the voice of the public and democratic participation, as well as the application of the ideals of state accountability and transparency in the electronic environment.

However, there is as yet no commonly agreed upon terminology or definitions for these concepts, despite the long history of these concepts, as well as the theories behind them. Researchers and editors emphasize the normative dimension of "digital democracy" and point to its importance as a key word. Digital democracy is "the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) and information and communication technologies (ICT) in all media, including the internet, interactive broadcasting, and digital telephony, for promoting political democracy and enhancing citizen participation in democracy communication processes. (Hacker & van Dijk, 2000)

For a number of reasons, Hacker and van Dijk suggest that the term "digital democracy" is better than other similar concepts. This does not mean that digital democracy will replace other forms of communication channels and face-to-face interactions completely. Various combinations of traditional and virtual forms of media are currently often being utilized in the practical implementation of democracy, as suggested by empirical studies. Hence, individuals remain the main source of participation and legitimacy in digital democracy, which considers technology as a means and an additional mechanism for democratic practice.

The term "e-democracy" is more general in nature, and other forms of broadcasting and telephones can be considered electronic as well. Hence, its usage has been limited in certain situations. Other means focus more on the unifying potential of both traditional and advanced technology through the presentation of the term "electronic or e-democracy" as a synonym for digital democracy.

Such an approach is backed by Päivärinta & Øystein, who describe e-democracy as the application of ICT in political discourse and decision-making. Päivärinta & Øystein describe e-democracy as a system that goes along with or in addition to conventional methods of communication, including face-to-face communication or one-to-many mass communication. This approach shows that digital democracy is not only an institution or a tool that improves the flexibility of public decision-making and democratic participation but also a technology. (Päivärinta & Øystein, 2006)

This view is supported by Coleman & Norris, who also support e-democracy and point out its main feature, namely the application of ICTs to support democratic processes and institutions. E-democracy, in turn, combines the top-down and bottom-up approaches, i.e., the more flexible network-based arrangements and the decision-making processes of the institutional hierarchies. (Coleman & Norris, 2005)

Thus, in the digital sphere, e-democracy re-creates the traditional values of democracy, such as accountability, transparency, and the participation of citizens in the decision-making process, but not just in the application of technology, but also through a variety of institutional, technological, and social means that ensure the more active participation of citizens in the decision-making process. From this perspective, e-democracy is a dynamic and flexible concept that meets the modern needs of the theory and practice of democracy.

The fact is that the Recommendation of the Council of Europe, adopted in the form of Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)1, is an important milestone in the creation of the institutional and

normative framework of e-democracy. It is considered one of the first comprehensive publications on a common political agenda for the adoption and development of e-democracy. It was addressed to the member states by the Committee of Ministers in 2009. Among the 12 clauses of the main body of the Recommendation, the following two are of special importance:

First and foremost, member states are encouraged to make use of the opportunities offered by e-democracy in order to enhance democracy, democratic institutions, and democratic processes (Council of Europe, 2009).

Second, e-democracy could be seen as a means of utilizing information and communication technology in order to develop and advance democracy and democratic processes as well as reactivating citizens in democratic processes. (Council of Europe, 2009) This strategy shows that, rather than being perceived as a technology in its own right, e-democracy is perceived as a means of enhancing legitimacy.

There are 102 "Guidelines" and 80 "e-democracy principles" set out in the Appendix to Recommendation CM/Rec(2009). Two concepts are prominent. Firstly, e-democracy is first and foremost about democracy. Its main purpose is to use ICTs to support democratic institutions and processes. Secondly, e-democracy is a strategy that builds upon and improves traditional forms of democracy. No mechanism is universal or can be applied as such; each has its own advantages (Council of Europe, 2009).

### Conclusion

The guide outlines several "sectors," or fields, that may be fertile ground for e-democracy to develop. These include e-parliament, e-legislation, e-justice, e-mediation, e-environment, e-election, e-referendum, e-initiative, e-voting, e-consultation, e-petition, e-campaign, and e-survey, among others. It also mentions e-forums, e-participation, and e-debate as the main tools that will be used in e-democracy.

Thus, the Council of Europe's pronouncement goes beyond establishing norms. It establishes the strategic directions that will be followed in the implementation of e-democracy and the principles that will inform it. It conceives e-democracy as a complex, multi-layered system of governance that seeks to uphold democratic values.

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