

# **Engaging Citizens with Televised Election Debates** through Online Interactive Replays

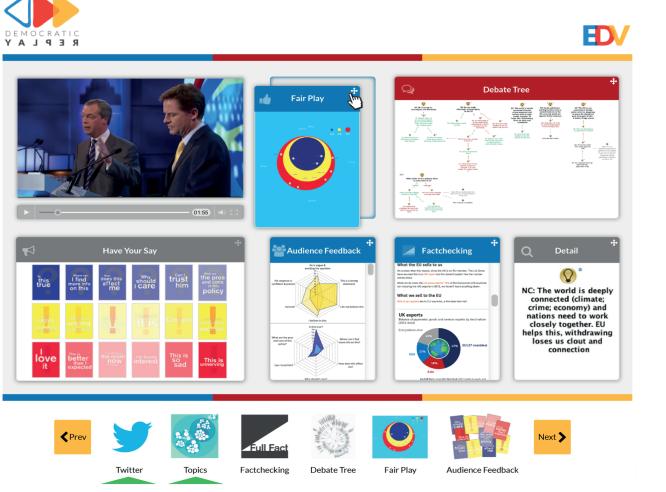
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The **EDV project** tackles the crisis of political trust and public engagement with politics by investigating **new** methods and tools to watch and take part in televised political debates.

Reviewing relevant research at the intersection of citizenship, technologies and government/democracy, we describe the motivation, requirements and design of **Democratic Replay** (right), an online interactive video replay platform that offers a persistent, customisable digital space for: (a) members of the public to express their views as they watch online videos of political events; and **(b)** enabling for a **richer** 



collective understanding of what goes on in these complex media events.

# Introduction

The Internet and mobile computing devices are changing how viewers experience political media events

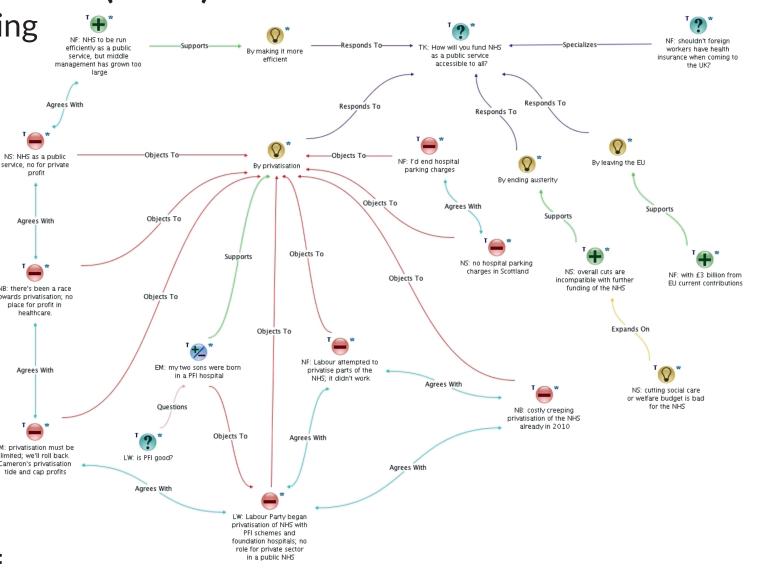
# **Democratic Replay**

In order to meet the requirements, **Democratic Replay uses in-depth analyses which are made freely** and openly available online as synchronised, dynamic and interactive visualisations.

#### We currently focus four analyses:

**1.** Computer Supported Argumentation Visualisation (CSAV) Political issues are often inherently complex, resulting in arguments that are beyond the grasp of many citizens. This causes citizens to feel excluded from the event and leads to disengagement. CSAV helps to make sense of complex arguments using information technologies [4].

Argument maps make crucial elements of arguments visually explicit: e.g. 'showing' how candidates are addressing key issues, their claims, whether they offer evidence for these claims, and how their arguments relate to each other.



like televised election debates [1, 18], offering streams of complementary information that originate from mainstream media and other viewers. We address **four challenges** in this context:

(a) the lack of organisation between information streams and media events, which can confuse viewers;

(b) the low levels of engagement with politics, which creates a divide between citizens and candidates;

(c) a need for citizens to communicate their views in meaningful ways knowing that they are heard; and

(d) the inherent complexity of in-depth analyses, which makes interpretation difficult to most viewers.

We envisage a future in which TV election debates are enriched by a range of information channels brought together coherently in an online debate replay with advanced analytics and visualisations, would turn viewing into a rich learning experience.

# Four Requirements for Online Interactive Election Debate Replays

We identified four high-level requirements for online interactive debate replays related to the areas of television and the Internet, political communication, collective intelligence, and hypermedia.

#### 1. Television and the Internet

Information technologies and social media are turning TV consumption into a participatory experience often involving thousands of viewers [1, 12]. Programme-specific companion apps can organise and deliver enhancements: inbound by channelling streams of information from the Internet to the viewers [13], and outbound by giving viewers access to comment channels and social media [1, 12], or to **special-purpose audience feedback tools** [10].

**Challenges** include these apps **distracting viewers** from TV contents [12, 13], and new media **alienating** individuals and social groups who are not 'tech-savvy' [6].

Requirement 1. The technology has to be non-intrusive and accessible to as wide a range of citizens as possible. This calls for a free and open platform in which access to contents is not limited by fees, memberships or proprietary licenses: e.g. an **open data**, **open source** web application. Information must be **non-trivial**, **relevant** and **synchronised with the video**.

### 2. Debate Rule Compliance Assessment

#### Candidates in election debates agree on a series of

implicit and explicit rules: e.g. they are expected to answer questions, stay on topic, respect turns and avoid personal attacks. When they avoid questions or attack each other, they violate this agreement, hindering communication in pursuit of egoistic goals.

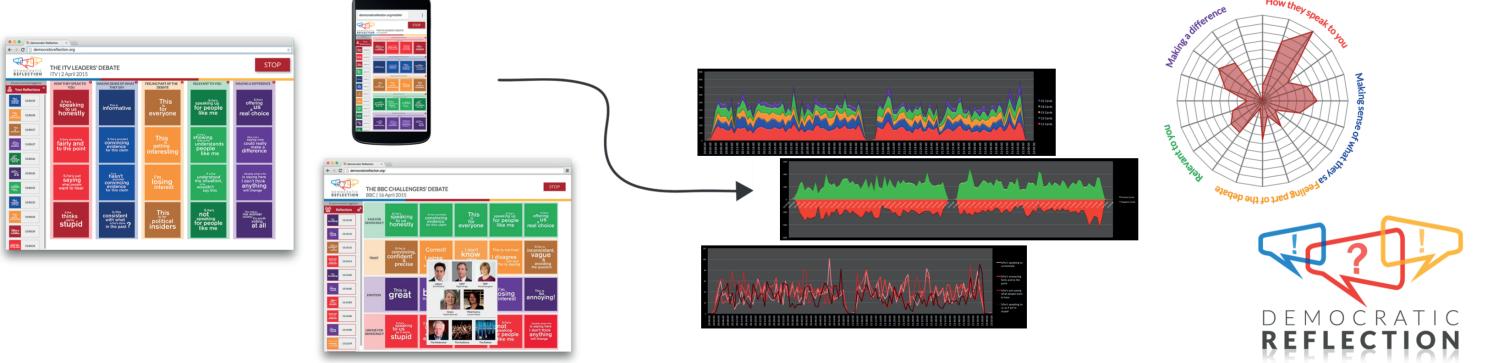
Following Plüss [20], we automatically analyse manually-annotated debate transcripts, yielding markers when rules are broken. These markers are visualised on a timeline and aggregated into scores that show

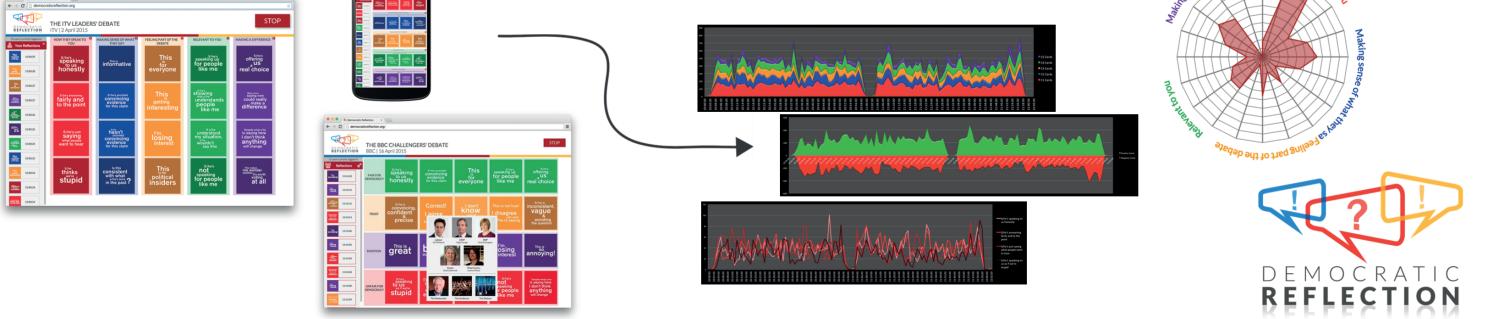
the extent to which a debater complied with the rules. Candidates' actions can thus be measured against the rules agreed by broadcasters and the parties, or against the citizens' democratic expectations. We hypothesise that **exposing violations will help** viewers to scrutinise politicians' rhetoric and detect manipulative communication strategies.

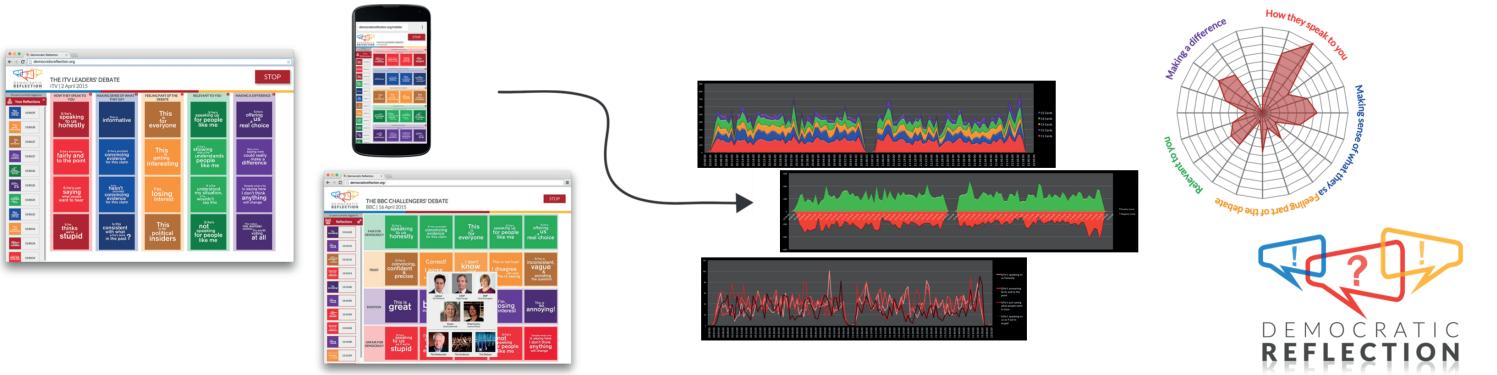
### **3. Instant Audience Feedback**

Non-cooperation summa

Democratic Replay incorporates visualisations of the feedback method proposed by De Liddo et al. [10], which consists of statement on coloured cards aimed at capturing live audience responses. During the live broadcast of the 2015 UK Election debates, 400 citizens used **Democratic Reflection**: a web application which allows them to select reaction statements as they watch the debate. Choices, linked to user identifiers and timestamps, were recorded as hypervideo annotations and visualised, giving a rich understanding of the audience's reactions to the debaters' performances.







#### 2. New Media and Live Political Events

Online media allow for more direct political representation [5], especially among young people [19].

Challenges include making events accessible, engaging and informative [3, 6, 18, 19], plus common **impediments of democratic participation**: e.g. failures in civic education, apathy, and a disconnect between citizens and politicians [21].

Requirement 2. The technology has to increase citizen engagement in political debates, addressing the reasons for disengagement: e.g. lack of trust in politicians' communication strategies [3], difficulties in understanding and evaluating political arguments [17], feelings that policies do not relate to citizens' lives [3, 6, 7]. This calls for a 'slowing down' of the debates, letting viewers play them at their own pace, with synchronised visualisations of in-depth analyses and non-trivial knowledge curation.

#### 3. Citizen Participation and Collective Intelligence

**Twitter sentiment analysis** has been used to map the changing mood of tweets during political media events [1, 18]. De Liddo et al. [10] proposed a method based on contested collective intelligence [11] aimed at engaging the audience with TV election debates while eliciting aware, rich and meaningful feedback through a set of statements on coloured flashcards.

**Challenges** include **uncovering the reason**s why Twitter users feel positive or negative [22] and finding suitable means for **delivering and scaling** collective intelligence methods using online apps.

Requirement 3. The technology has to provide effective means for viewers to participate in the debate experience. This involves digital participatory channels for citizens to express their views as they watch the event, ensuring that the views are attended to [7].

#### 4. Factchecking

This is the verification of claims against objective evidence [14]. In political debates, factcheckers contrast debaters' claims with publicly available evidence, determining whether they are factually true, false, etc. The UK independent factchecker Full Fact checked in real-time the truthfulness claims in the 2014 Clegg-Farage EU debates. Democratic replay incorporates their **factchecking analyses** as hypermedia visualisations.



5. Deporting criminals



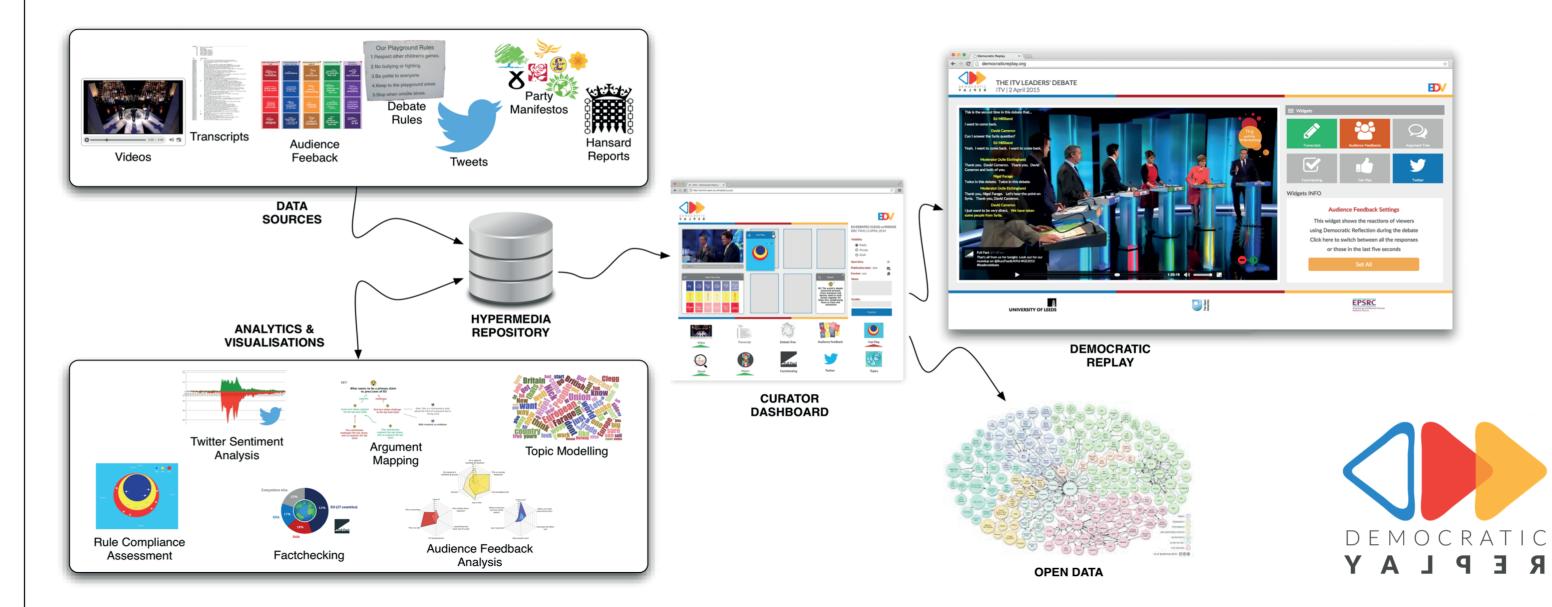
Earnings versus prices



en borders for 485 million people e haven't found a match for this figure. The total EU population outside the U

# **Platform Overview and Front End Prototype**

Data Sources are imported into a Hypermedia Repository. Analytics and Visualisations of the data are added to the repository as hypermedia annotations, packed with the video on the **Curator Dashboard** and published in **Democratic Replay**. These can also be exported as **Open Data** for reuse and dissemination.



#### 4. Hypervideo for Enhanced Televised Debates

Hypervideo refers to video that can be navigated non-linearly via timed links. Technologies for deploying hypervideo (such as the HTML5 video tag) allow for video replay manipulations and functional links to hypermedia annotations.

Challenges include designing and implementing suitable interactive video-synced visualisations and the mechanisms to deliver these on the Web.

Requirement 4. Complementary information has to be presented in ways that are consistent, **non-intrusive and accessible**. This involves developing techniques for turning annotations into meaningful visualisations, coupling hypervideo technologies like the HTML5 video tag, with dynamic data visualisation libraries like D3.js.

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