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Abstract: Today, governmental bodies in many countries acknowledge ICT applications to be powerful tools for increasing involvement of citizens in public policy-making, and as such a sound investment in better public policy (OECD 2003: 9). Within the Dutch governmental bodies a study by Prof. Dr. Kickert (2005:10) has shown that these ICT developments also demand an optimal public service. Furthermore citizens are inclined to participate more often if governments use digital tools, because of their (usability) speed and comfort (Beffers & Van den Brink, 2007). The last decade the Dutch governmental bodies have become increasingly aware of the possibilities of ICT applications and the growing digital behaviour of its citizens. To prepare the next phase of large scale and structural implementation of eDemocracy, the size and range of that task must be researched. This paper describes research conducted at the municipality of The Hague (The Netherlands). It was aimed to determine how many political issues lend itself to e-democratic support. The research then categorized the issues using the policy cycle (agenda-setting, preparation, determination, execution, monitoring and evaluation) and styles of citizenship (dutiful, pragmatic and society critic). Some results of the research: During the course of 3 years the city council and its committees treated 1834 issues. Of these, 69% were treated by the city council committees and 31% by the city council itself. 78% of issues could be categorised within the policy making process. According to the styles of citizenship, citizens are most likely to participate when issues directly relate to their personal environment (pragmatic), as well as issues concerning the qualitative functionality of the local government (society critic).

Keywords: eDemocracy, public agenda issues, local policy-making, policy cycle, styles of citizenship, digital participation

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

This exploratory research grew out of an interest in the future of eDemocracy. The large-scale practical adoption of eDemocracy that is to be expected creates many questions that are not asked or answered. Based in The Netherlands, we wanted to inquire what adopting eDemocracy would actually mean when each and every one of the 430 Dutch municipalities would structurally enrich all their democratic processes with it. How many democratic issues should be active in a municipality at any one time? Who would be interested in digital participation on those issues and what type of support would they require? Should such digital support be consistent over different municipalities, possibly adding to the legitimacy of government? What is the magnitude of such an endeavour, would it require extra people and would enough funds be available? The aim of this research is to take a first step towards providing answers to these questions.

We found a lack of available research that could assist in the predictive planning of eDemocracy. While it is assumed that eGovernment will see continued development and possibly widespread adoption, current research focuses on issues such as conceptual context, the process of development, the various tools available, the transformation of government and the possible effectiveness of such applications. There is little or no research that prepares government organizations with actual practical and predictive planning.

1.2 eGovernment development

The widespread and global development of eGovernment has been addressed by many institutions, including the UN, in their reports on the civil society (2001, 2003 & 2005). Several parties describe the stages of development for eGovernment: Gartner (2000); The United Nations (2001); Layne and Lee (2001); Janssen en Van Veenstra (2005) & Al Hashim and Darem overview (2008). Those models of development may have information management (Gartner, UN & IBM) or technical management (Janssen & Van Veenstra 2005) as their angle, but all models assume growth in use, size and quality of eGovernment infrastructure and applications, often implicitly. The new research agenda’s described (Codagnone & Wimmer 2007) identify ‘research into e-participation’ as one of the 13 trends and mentions
the ‘broad realization of e-participation’ but does not designate the magnitude of the practical application of eDemocracy as an area of interest.

1.3 eDemocracy: is democratic decision making a constant?

This research adopts a narrow focus and looks at existing policy development processes within current government: what would it mean when a municipality adopts eDemocracy throughout its existing processes? The research is exploratory and preliminary in that it seeks to outline the validity of a viewpoint and an approach. The viewpoint is that most democratic processes exist for a reason, such as running a city or a state. Performing that task requires a certain number of issues that have to be decided upon. The question is whether the number of democratic issues in a process such as running a city is a relative constant. It is an interesting question: when that would be the case, adding eDemocracy might possibly change the dynamics of the process and the quality of the outcome, but it would not dramatically increase the number of issues decided upon. The approach that this research tries to develop is using the entries on the municipal agenda’s to gauge to amount of democratic issues, and use life style research to gauge possible interest in the population. It is the first in a series that in the coming years tries to develop a model that may allow municipalities to assess the necessary investment required to support its core democratic process and answer the question whether democratic decision-making within a certain context is a constant.

1.4 Research question

But the widespread adoption of e-democratic tools and applications throughout government will require an extensive effort and investment in time and tools. Our research aims to outline those practical requirements: what would the broad adoption of eDemocracy mean in the current democratic processes? Although the exploratory research is simple, the aim is to create a model that allows municipalities to determine the possible workload of broad digital support for democratic processes. Such a model would be based on at least two aspects: the number of democratic issues that lend themselves to digital support and the latent need of citizens to participate in the democratic process. Thus the main question translates into three sub-questions:

- How many democratic issues are active at any one time?
- How many issues lend themselves for digital support?
- How many citizens would be interested in e-participation?

2. Method

In order to answer these questions, we have utilised the following method:

- Inventory democratic issues on the agenda of a large city, in this case The Hague
- Categorize them according to the policy cycle
- Assess citizen’s possible interest in participation according to lifestyle
- Map lifestyles preferences onto democratic issues citizens may wish to participate in
- Match citizen’s interests and democratic issues

The study in question was conducted at the municipality of The Hague, one of the four largest municipalities of The Netherlands with circa 450,000 inhabitants. The city of The Hague was selected since research shows that larger municipalities are able to reach larger groups of citizens for participation, due mainly to the fact that they have more possibilities of offering information when compared to smaller municipalities (Cascadis 2007: 6).

2.1 Inventory of the number of democratic issues

To determine the number of democratic issues treated by municipal governing bodies we created an inventory of the topics on the agenda and the list of decisions of both the city council and its committees. To that end we looked at the agenda’s of a three year period of one council (following elections in 2006) for the city of The Hague (Beleidsakkoord Den Haag 2006-2010, [Policy agreement of The Hague 2006-2010] 2006).
2.2 Categorizing issues according to policy cycle

In order to determine what issues would lend themselves to e-democratic support the issues were categorized according to the phases of a model of the policy cycle. Policymaking can be defined as ‘the case-to-case determination of guiding and controlling the developments within the society by the government’ (Bovens, ’t Hart & van Twist 2007: 99). The process of shaping and executing policy implies a policy making process that is cyclical in character, and indicates policymaking is an ongoing development process.

For our research we adopted the policy cycle model of Simon (in Edelenbos & Monnikhof 2001: 44), consisting of six phases: agenda-setting, preparation, determination, execution, evaluation and monitoring. The characteristics of the phases can be found in table 1.

Table 1: Phases policy cycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase in the cycle</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Agenda-setting</td>
<td>The process in which citizens and/or government policy makers are confronted with problems that are occurring within the society (Bovens et al 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Preparation</td>
<td>The collection and analyses of information concerning the specific problem in order to formulate a recommendation concerning the conducted policy (Bovens et al 2007), as well as finding and proposing workable and affordable solutions for the problem (Herweijer &amp; Pröpper 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Determination</td>
<td>Decision making concerning the content of the policy (Bovens et al 2007). Specifically, the policy must be coherent with the wishes of the society concerning the problem, including the conditions in which the execution of the policy occurs should be determined (Pröpper &amp; Steenbeek 1999).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Execution</td>
<td>This phase concerns the actual execution of the policy (Pröpper &amp; Steenbeek 1999) by transforming policy proposals into concrete actions (Bovens et al 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Evaluation</td>
<td>Judging and analysing the content of the policy and its gained results/effect (Bovens et al 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Monitoring</td>
<td>Processing the results from the evaluation concerning an eventual continuous follow up on the policy, otherwise redefining the policy core and the execution of the policy (Bovens et al 2007).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each phase within the cycle creates a different context for participation. The influence of citizens depends on their right/ability to participate and their desire to do so. Local government may choose to only inform citizens, to let them give advice or involve citizens in the co-production of local policy. Some research indicates that the effectiveness of policy and its execution is related to the influence citizens have or had (Peeters 2002). Each of the phases in the cycle provides different opportunities. According to Peeters (2002) the phase of agenda setting is specifically shaped by social and political issues. In choosing their political representatives, citizens exercise one means of influencing whether certain issues are treated by the city council (Herweijer & Pröpper 2008). In some situations citizens have the right to generate “citizen initiatives” that has legal validity. It may be advantageous for local government to let citizen’s advice or co-produce within the policy preparation phase. Additionally, it is mandatory by law for the municipality to offer at least a voting opportunity for citizens to approve certain policy actions (Herweijer & Pröpper 2008). Within the execution phase experienced citizens may participate, because there transparency may have citizen’s recognize whether governmental action was appropriate. The phases most geared to contributions by citizens seem to be agenda setting, preparation, execution and evaluation.

2.3 The interest of citizens in participation: Lifestyle analysis of citizenship

The second factor determining the magnitude of adoption of eDemocracy is the interest and motivation of citizens in participating. In order to determine such interest in participation by citizens we looked at the method of lifestyle analysis. In 1997 the Dutch research and strategy organization, Motivaction, developed a Mentality lifestyle model identifying seven lifestyle clusters.

On the basis of that model they went on to further develop the notion of ‘styles of citizenship’ (Motivaction 2001) in which four styles of citizenship are distinguished based upon their research on the mentality and society norms of citizens:
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- Outsiders/inactive
- Dutiful/dependent
- Pragmatic/conformist
- Society critic/responsible

This research, undertaken for the Commissions Toekomst Overheidscommunicatie (Committee of Future Governmental communication) and the Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (Scientific Council for Governmental Policy), is used by many different Dutch government organizations to segment their clients. In this exploratory research we use this method to determine both what part of the population might be interested in policy issues, as well as what issues they might be interested in.

The first style, called ‘outsiders’, is characterized as low intensity participants. These types of citizens are rarely invited to co-produce policy (Motivaction 2001). That is the reason this group ‘outsiders’ is excluded from this research.

The second style, called ‘dutiful’, is characterized as having a passive attitude towards developments in society (Motivaction 2001). Although they are involved with activities within their immediate and local environment, they distance themselves from other forms of involvement. These citizens may be active within local activities such as volunteering for social organizations. This group is missing key competencies to keep up to date on developments within society and they have to build on the experience of local governments.

The third style, called ‘pragmatic’, is a large group in Dutch society. They are not directly involved nor feel responsible, show a selective reactive attitude and they prefer information in main points which are easy and straightforward to understand. They expect (local) governmental bodies to perform according to a predetermined framework and do their work in the background (Motivaction 2001).

The last style, called ‘society critics’, is described as having the most involved and responsible attitude towards the society. The group is characterized by initiative and participative activities and an open attitude with interest in the democratic process of (local) government. This group of citizens is particularly interested in the functioning of government bodies, such as financial prognoses and elected management functions (Motivaction 2001).

3. Results

3.1 The number of democratic issues

Over a period of three years the city of The Hague had 1834 issues on the agenda’s of both city council and committees. This follows from a meeting frequency with city council meetings every three weeks and two committees meetings every week.

Of the 1834 issues counted 31% were treated by the city council and 69% by its committees. If we look at the issues we notice that 1266 issues were treated by the committees and could be divided into seven topics, roughly following the structure of working committees displayed in table 2.

Table 2: number of issues and committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>number of issues and committees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>accounts / process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>mobility and environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>254</td>
<td>safety, governance and finances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>social affairs, employment, economics and international affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>395</td>
<td>urban development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>welfare development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>183</td>
<td>youth and citizenship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In corporation with the office of the clerk we were categorize 67% of the 1834 issues according to a phase in the policy cycle. 227 issues were marked a phase ‘0’ because they were identified as internal and procedural and I) of little interest to those outside the municipal organization and II) the policy making phases offer no functionality.
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Some issues on the agenda could be categorized in two or more phases at the same time, for example when they may be interpreted as creating new policy as well as contributing to the effectiveness of existing policy. That way they would fit the preparation as well as evaluation phases. Such the double or triple appearances are divided proportionally over their different phases as detailed in table 3.

**Table 3:** Policy making phases and number of issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Number of issues according combined phases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agenda-setting (phase 1)</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation (phase 2)</td>
<td>597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination (phase 3)</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Execution (phase 4)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation (phase 5)</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring (phase 6)</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After categorization the differences are clear: most issues that might benefit from citizen's participation are found in the preparation, the determination and the evaluation phases.

### 3.2 Determining citizen interest in policy and preference for issues

Using questionnaires, Motivaction determined how the four different citizenship styles - outsiders, dutiful, pragmatic and society critic - were present within the population of The Hague. This research does not only show the number of people characterized by each of the different lifestyles, but it will in fact allow us to determine which part of the population might be interested in democratic participation and on which topics.

The research shows a marked difference between the population of The Hague and that of the rest of The Netherlands in table 4.

**Table 4:** Styles of citizenship The Hague compared with The Netherlands (Motivaction 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style of citizenship</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
<th>The Hague</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outsiders</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>144.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutiful</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>31.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>157.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society critic</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>117.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The city of The Hague shows a more prominent group of pragmatic (24%) and society critic citizens (19%) than other parts of The Netherlands. These groups have an individual attitude, are well informed, are used to expressing their opinions and stand their ground on such issues. They also want to co-decide with the (local) government. The pragmatic group has a more distanced attitude and is mostly concerned with its grounds. The society critic group is politically active and also stands for social ground. The groups named outsiders and dutiful are relatively outnumbered and represent themselves as family orientated and less socially concerned. Dutiful take a more docile approach towards the government, while outsiders stay distanced. Due to the large distance of the 'outsider' style to the democratic process, they are assumed to be fully disinterested and do not play a further role. To determine what part of the population might be interested in what kind of democratic participation we categorized the democratic issues on the agenda according to the qualities of the different styles of citizenship. The result may be seen in the table 5. With both the number of citizens for a lifestyle and democratic issues, we can infer the number of citizens with a probable interest in those issues.

**Table 5:** Styles of citizenship and issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lifestyle</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>3 yr Issues</th>
<th>1 yr Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outsiders</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>xxx.xxxx</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutiful</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>31.500</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>157.500</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society critic</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>117.700</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>450.000</td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This shows that when a city like The Hague wants to provide digital support for eDemocracy it will mean providing that support for around 330 policy issues each year. Of the total population of 450,000 people, around 275,000 citizens would be interested in participating, being a member of either the pragmatic of the society critic styles of citizenship.

4. Concluding observations and further directions

With this research we address eDemocracy from a different angle. We focus on the broad and structural support of digital democratic processes in the future. Rather than researching available new technologies we look at democratic processes in real life: how many democratic issues does it take to run a city and how many of its citizens would be interested? And as a consequence: what would it take for local governments to start supporting that in the coming years?

The results of this initial exploratory research show that a Dutch city with a population of around 450,000 inhabitants handles approximately 300 democratic issues per annum. In the case of the broad adoption of eDemocracy with full digital support for current democratic activities that would mean setting up and maintaining approximately 300 democratic dialogues online. Such digital support might allow citizens to inform themselves, reflect on and participate in the democratic process. That reality of maintaining 300 online democratic dialogues could turn out to be quite an effort. In its simplest form it implies the necessity for supportive document management systems, appropriate meta data and appropriate forms of presentation. Though simple in concept, in reality each of these aspects is a challenge: we would need to develop a consistent online representation of political issues, including its financial aspects. These do not exist today. In its most complex form online case files would be enriched with news and background information, communities and forums and special applications that solicit advice from interested parties. In that form such online case files would require constant attention from a new breed of professionals that is able to inspire, maintain and structure a complex set of interactions on many different levels such that the contributions of the audience provide a constructive addition to the existing process.

All this would be worth it if enough citizens would be interested. Using lifestyle research as an angle to gauge possible interest shows that around 275,000 or 60% of this city’s inhabitants might be interested in participating on some of these issues. They might be interested: it wouldn’t mean they actually would be interested. This research also revealed a marked difference between the population of The Hague (the seat of government, parliament and many other international organizations) and the general population, which might indicate that democratic participation is sensitive in its context and would have to be determined in each city again. It also provided the initial view of the size and scope of digital support for democratic processes online.

The aim of our research is the creation of practical support for local governmental bodies, creating a model allowing municipalities to assess the investment necessary to realize digital support for eDemocracy. Such a model might balance on two aspects: operational en democratic.

Firstly, since we are interested in questions of implementation we would pay attention to the operational complexity of implementing online support for democratic issues. Operational complexity may identify both the technical and procedural effort required to realize digital support for democratic issues. It may seem odd to have operational issues as a main element in deciding the quality of democratic support, but creating true digital support for eDemocracy may be technically complex requiring the replacement of current IT systems and web environments, and might even need preliminary research to create the solutions necessary. The time and money required by that process determines the pace of adoption of e-democratic support.

Low operational complexity might consist of issues that may be supported by a small number of existing documents, delivered from existing information systems. High operational complexity might consist of issues needing to be supported by live coverage or meetings with meta data, crowd sourcing, intensive dialogues with the population, e-petitions or even voting. These would require extensive investment in research and testing before being able to be used routinely.

Secondly, we need to assess the democratic necessity of creating online support for issues. This is determined by size, procedural constraints and importance for individual citizens or politics. On the one hand democracy consists of many rather inconsequential issues with relatively low interest and involvement, while on the other end it has issues which are high visibility, high importance and high involvement.
This might lead to a matrix that, when filled, allows us to decide whether and how we may prioritize the implementation of digital support for eDemocracy.

The figure below displays the matrix.

![Matrix to prioritize the implementation of digital support for eDemocracy](image)

**Figure 1**: Matrix to prioritize the implementation of digital support for eDemocracy

The broad and structural implementation of eDemocracy is not a simple matter. Further research will need to determine what kind of support is suitable for what issue, how e-democratic case files should be represented online to achieve the most effective participation, how a collaborative decision making process could be supported for larger audiences and how the financial structure of underlying issues should be visualized to be understandable. Such research may show the many different tools we may need to really support eDemocracy on a larger scale and allow government professionals to make a reasonable decision how to develop the systems and tools needed to realize that.

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