

## Evaluating eParticipation Projects: Practical Examples and Outline of an Evaluation Framework

As regards the need for sound evaluation, research on eParticipation has not kept pace with advances in eParticipation practice. This article acknowledges the importance of systematic analyses of processes and outcomes against predefined criteria and intends to contribute to closing the “evaluation gap”. The assumption is that benefits to be gained from evaluation are manifold: e.g., identifying conditions and extent of success as well as deficits; using insights as leverage for change, organisational learning and improved management; or determining how far an eParticipation project helps to enhance democracy.

The contribution focuses on government-driven eParticipation activities especially within the area of consultation and deliberation, and takes into account practical experience of the evaluation of a four-year transnational project including more than 30 eParticipation pilot cases. A common feature of these pilots is the combination of multiple communication channels and media which promote engagement. It is shown that the strength of the Internet mainly concerns its potential to provide transparency and to converge interests and information in a process through carefully elaborated websites. A layered model of an evaluation framework is presented with distinctive criteria, indicators and methods which are seen as an important step to support “real” evaluation. We are aware of the principle problems of such a framework – e.g. that it is either too comprehensive or that many aspects are missing or require further specification from a practitioner’s view. This theory-practice tension is addressed while we describe the evaluation method and problems experienced in three specific eParticipation cases. They include two research designs – comparative and offline-online synthesising methods. Some principle challenges of the research designs are explained; i.e. in comparative design the difficulty to find comparable cases, cultural and technical differences, advantages and disadvantages of remote and mediated evaluation. For the design of combined offline and online tools, especially resource and data problems, and cooperation demands among government agencies are addressed. Independent from the design, the effort to take into account the users’ perspectives is highlighted. The outlined framework is introduced as a reference model with the intention to complement and extend the scope of evaluation perspectives and to stimulate ideas for individual evaluation projects on eParticipation.



Georg  
Aichholzer



Hilmar  
Westholm

Institute of Technology  
Assessment, Austrian  
Academy of Sciences

### Keywords

eParticipation; evaluation,  
practice, case studies,  
multi-channel

“ Evaluation of eParticipation is indispensable if knowledge of greater precision and objectivity is wanted about the effectiveness, the value, the success of an eParticipation project, initiative or programme. ”

## 1 Introduction

While eParticipation practices more and more leave the status of exercises and pilots, there are few existing, rigorous evaluation approaches ready for application in this area. Some refer to participation in general and different participation methods (Rowe & Frewer, 2000; 2004; Warburton et al., 2007), while evaluations of eParticipation are rare (e.g., Henderson et al., 2005; Janssen & Kies, 2005; Kubicek et al., 2007; Winkler, 2007) and emerging frameworks are still embryonic (cf. Macintosh & Whyte, 2008; Aichholzer & Allhutter, 2008). Some contributions are concentrated on the information aspect of transparency and accountability of websites and tools (e.g. Pina et al., 2007), or – such as existing benchmarking approaches to eParticipation (e.g. UN, 2005 & 2008) – lack an in-depth analysis of quality and neglect impacts. Others addressing wider impacts such as on quality of democracy (e.g., Coppedge & Reinicke, 1990; Diamond & Morlino, 2005) or governance (e.g., Skelcher et al., 2005; Schmitter, 2005) offer relevant criteria but have not been adapted to eParticipation specifically. Existing deficits regarding evaluation are confirmed by scholars calling for more research into the effectiveness of electronic forms of public engagement (Rowe & Gammack 2004).

In this article, we introduce a framework of eParticipation that was developed by the authors within the DEMO-net project in cooperation with other European researchers (DEMO-net 2008). There we reviewed and analysed applied methods appropriate for the evaluation of eParticipation and offered core criteria and indicators relevant to different kinds of eParticipation activities such as consultation and deliberation. Given resource-limitations of stakeholders (conducting institutions and observing research institutions) in practice, we assume that it may only be possible to apply elements of the framework. To specifically address this theory-practice problem, we combine this analytic framework with the evaluation experience of the four-year project EVOICE that covered around 30 individual eParticipation projects of municipalities in five European countries. This project also reflects the fact that local municipalities normally apply a multi-channel approach of different means of participation including offline and online means (Westholm, 2008).

The objective is to present an evaluation framework relevant for eParticipation practice and to illustrate challenges and difficulties on the basis of three examples. The framework should be relevant for a broader set of application contexts and take into account differences in cultural and administrative approach to eParticipation in different European countries. A specific advantage is that the framework was developed recently and that it potentially provides a new approach for evaluating the EVOICE cases.

## 2 Brief description of the EVOICE project

The main aims of the EVOICE project were to increase and enhance political interest and engagement of European citizens in general political issues by using the potential of modern ICT tools to increase citizen participation and to access the administrative system. A premise was that the tools need to be employed in a well-considered manner in combination with traditional means of communication. Further on, the project plan said: “The most appropriate approach cannot be found in a single act, but only gradually in a learning process of experimentation, evaluation, improvement, second evaluation, second improvement, etc. And since there is no single solution for all kinds of topics, these learning processes have to be carried out for different subjects at different locations” (EVOICE 2004, pt. 3.4). Between 2004 and 2008, the resulting so-called *multi media dialogue approach* (MMDA) became the umbrella of more than 30 eParticipation projects conducted in the municipalities of Dantumadeel, Groningen (both in the Netherlands), Bremen (Germany), Uddevalla, Ale and Hårryda (Sweden) and in the regions of Kortrijk (Belgium) and Norfolk (UK).

More precisely, the multi-media-dialogue-approach is conceptualised on two levels:

- *Methods* (channels) of information, consultation and collaboration (from broadcasting council meetings to person-to-person „kitchen table talks“ and cooperative environments on the net), and
- *Meta-communication* to reach the attention of citizens for participation opportunities and to report (interim) results (e.g. via newspapers, broadcasting, Internet newsletters, SMS-notifications).

Addressees of the projects and the MMDA were three target groups: policy makers, civil servants, and citizens.

Differentiating basic categories of eParticipation activities (cf. DEMO-net 2007), most EVOICE-pilots matched the category “*information provision*” which was distinguished into the four subcategories “spreading content and results of council meetings by broadcasting them”, “document handling systems on the Internet to enhance freedom of information”, “games” and “services”. The second most applied category was “*consultation*” and covered diverse methods and tools such as discussion boards and chats on the Internet, kitchen table talks and physical meetings, SMS-requests and responses – normally combined and mainly based on information given

on a website. Some further offers matched the categories “community building/collaborative environments”, “deliberation and cooperation”, and “electioneering”.<sup>1</sup> This underlines the fact that interactive forms were less often used – which is not accidental but stresses existing situations not only in the six EVOICE pilot sites: Governments are focussing on better information provision via the Internet because here they see the biggest advantage in this technology. Interactive tools need back office integration in the sense that the incoming information and arguments of the users have to be transferred to the policy makers in charge and demand for official response which again binds resources.

### 3 Evaluation approach and methods applied in the EVOICE project

The methodological challenge of this project was to evaluate activities, results and impact of a quite new research area because, at its beginning, eParticipation evaluation frameworks were practically non-existent. Besides, comparative methods had to be applied to assess exercises at pilot sites in five different countries. The most important challenge was that the project comprised a very high number of eParticipation processes which are hardly comparable.

The main questions regarding evaluation were as follows:

- What can be learnt regarding the multi-media dialogue approach?
  - Which (combinations of) tools were sensible,
  - Which were relevant for specific target audiences,
  - Did the use of ICTs enable political equality and the inclusion of further groups (e.g. the youth)?
  - Which level of engagement (e.g. information, consultation, collaboration) can be reached with which instrument?
- What was undertaken to promote the eParticipation activities?
- What is the impact of the procedures regarding implementation of results and durable integration into traditional procedures?
- What is the impact of the whole project; does it support democratisation of politics in the municipalities?
- What are the advantages regarding integration of ICTs into traditional processes, e.g. regarding access to information, transparency, relevance and quality of information provided?

Project evaluation was mainly based on third-party exploration of partners’ oral activity reports at partner meetings and their discussions, as well as on documents such as half-yearly activity reports and scientific reports by scholars involved in specific projects on the partners’ sites. These measurements were combined with personal evaluation visits at all partner sites including expert interviews and focus groups with civil servants involved in the pilots. Major sources were interim reports about evaluation activities given at the partner meetings with partners’ feedback and participative observation of selected offline participation activities, plus inspection of Internet websites and tools.<sup>2</sup>

The partners were instructed to conduct so-called “eParticipation panels” and to provide reports about them. Once a year, these panels discussed a set of common questions and some pilot-specific questions. The common questions included:

- Which media/tools/channels were offered, which channels were preferred by citizens and by civil servants for responses?)
- Which target groups and which main themes/topics were addressed?
- What were successful combinations in specific situations? What are the (dis-)advantages of different media (combinations)?

To illustrate this evaluation approach within the given space, in the next paragraph we limit ourselves exclusively on the first question, focusing on socio-technical aspects.

---

1 No projects were conducted in the categories “campaigning”, “discourse”, “mediation”, “spatial planning”, “polling”, and “voting”.

2 Besides, for auditing purposes of the funding instrument, the InterregIIIB-programme of the EU, a range of indicators was set up e.g. to list (websites’) outreach and dissemination activities.

## 4 Case studies illustrating the socio-technical evaluation component

We choose three cases to illustrate and evaluate the multi media dialogue approach developed within EVOICE on the channel level and to self-critically reflect the evaluation methods used. The three cases were selected because they illustrate the complexity of multi-media combinations and stand for consultation and deliberation, two areas of eParticipation activities often discussed.

The “Stadionbad” case conducted in Bremen (Germany) reflects one of the rare deliberation-exercises. The second example, from the municipality of Ale (Sweden), labelled as “listening to citizens” – describes a procedure how government keeps in touch with the citizens to be consulted. The third case shows a consultation process aiming at a vision of the village of Zwaagwesteinde (Netherlands). The criteria and indicators relevant in this context are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Criteria, indicators and measures used to evaluate embedding of eParticipation tools in the EVOICE multi-media-dialogue approach in the practice cases

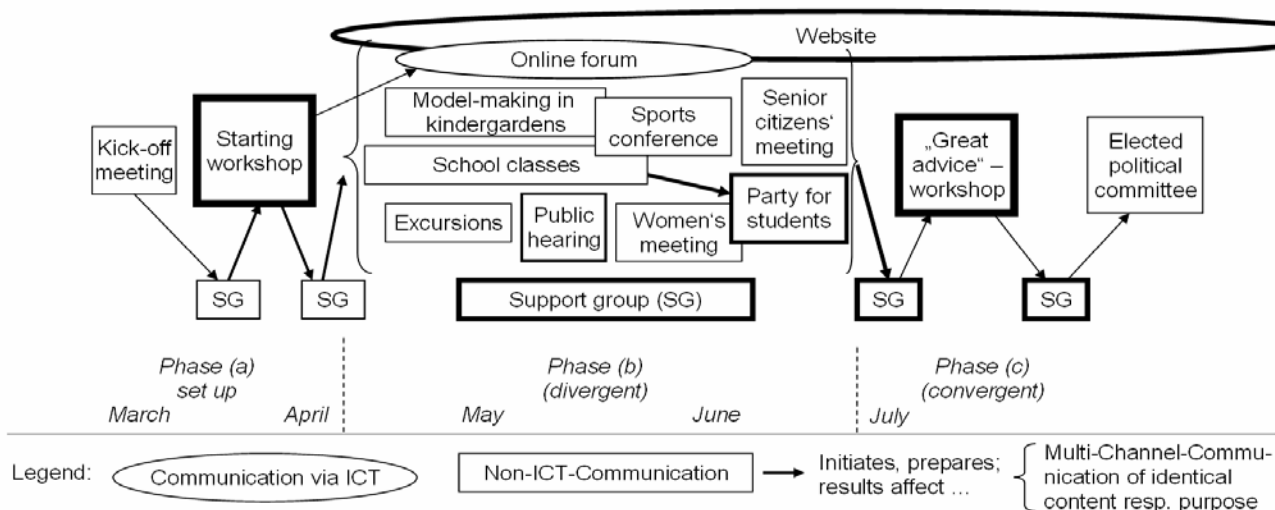
Criteria	Indicators	Measures and methods
Relevance of ICT-tools among method-combination	Usage-rate	Process diagram, focus groups / panel
	Target groups reached (social inclusiveness)	Participative observation, focus group / panel
	Adequate content provision	Focus group / panel
	Number of users	Log file analysis
Support of responsiveness	The tool allows to answer the user's question quickly and effectively	Tool observation, surveys
	The site provides contact information, FAQs, search functions	Tool observation
Support of rich in content interaction between users and policy makers and among users	Quantity of postings	Logfile analysis
	Quality of comments	Thread counting and text analysis

Each case will be described in three steps. Starting with an overview of the context of the case, evaluation techniques to analyse the combinations of tools and other participation methods are applied and, finally, conclusions are drawn.

### 4.1 Deliberation paths with the Internet as guarantor of transparency: Case “Stadionbad” in Bremen (Germany)

This case study is about the renovation of a public swimming pool with one controversy being whether this could be done more ecologically on a chlorine-free basis or not. The target audience were mainly the inhabitants of the districts near the pool, around 30,000 residents.

As a new city and state parliament was elected at that time, the district council took the initiative to organise a broad consensus-oriented citizen participation process. The renovation was successfully included in the coalition agreement and a contract was concluded between government and the main stakeholders to involve the public and to implement the results of this participation project. Responsibilities and decision-making power were not overruled; a parliamentary committee still decided on the funding. But the involved parties decided to organise a consensus-oriented procedure in advance of the discussion. If a consensus was reached, it should have a great impact on the decision. Many types of events were conducted and ICT-tools were provided to involve the different users of the swimming pool (see Figure 1). After three months, a consensus was reached how to design the pool and later implemented by the political bodies.



**Figure 1.** Process-diagram to illustrate the multi-media-dialogue-approach in the Bremen case

The procedure illustrated in Figure 1 in principle had three sequences. First, preparing sessions in the form of an organisational kick-off meeting and a whole-day “starting workshop” creating understanding among the different interest groups in a controversial design process with the clear statement that a solution would only be possible if the interests of the other swimming pool users were considered. Second, a “divergent” communication process,<sup>3</sup> to collect and convey the ideas and opinions of different stakeholders, started with parallel means of participation, either targeted at specific audiences or focussing on specific aspects of the problem, illustrated within the large brackets in Figure 1. Third, the process concluded with a “great advisory workshop” converging the ideas of the second phase to a common result.

Parallel to these three phases, a “support group” of 25 persons representing the district council and other key actors (swimming clubs, the administration, school classes, etc.) combined stakeholder, coordination, planning and internal communication functions; it was the seismograph for all developments in the process. The group met physically but non-publicly every three to four weeks during the process, and some times afterwards, on demand to monitor the implementation of the results. It identified problems, prepared and finished other sub-processes, thought about which target groups could be reached by which measures, identified the issues not yet dealt with, collected ideas from other participation methods and presented the results to political bodies. The work of this group was characterised by the wish of most members to reach a common “district vote” in spite of several opposite opinions, by taking the position of the other interest groups into account.

From the point of view of the multi media dialogue approach evaluated here, according to the main actors representing the different interests interviewed before and after the process, the support group and the website played a key role for the communication of the process steps (see overview in Table 2). While the combined offers of phase 2 addressed different target groups, such as the youth, sport swimmers, senior citizens, handicapped or women, it was expected according to the evaluation interviews conducted at the beginning that the online discussion forum would provide a broad common base for the different groups listening to each other and to reach common proposals. Compared to the strong use of the website, the forum was not used as much. About 100 visitors per week followed the discussions. 50 mostly constructive and well-founded contributions were posted. Discussions with each other were rare.<sup>4</sup>

The website was the always accessible “idea pool” of the project according to the actors interviewed at the end: Suggestions and results from various sub-processes were documented on the Internet so that, not only those

<sup>3</sup> Similar to Dennis & Valacich (1999) from communication studies, we distinguish between “convergent” and “divergent” communication and participation elements: While the latter open the process to receive and to disseminate ideas and results to the target audience (“conveyance”), “convergent” forms of participation synthesize interim-results (e.g. threads of a discussion forum) and focus the discussion.

<sup>4</sup> In one case the arguments of the public hearing on water quality (chlorine or natural?) were exchanged on the forum so that also those interested people who could not take part in the panel discussion (or did not understand the arguments) could read them on the forum pages. In another case, the issue of violence of (migrant) youths, which was not discussed in public, was dealt with. The results of the Internet forum were evaluated separately. The contributions could be read on the website even after the discussion was finished.

directly concerned could look up the results of their meeting, but that other groups could also check up how the others proceeded. At the height of the participation process, there were about 100 visits per day to the website. Moreover, the website was like an archive for journalists and planners who could participate only sporadically and wanted to inform themselves on planning ideas presented a few weeks later.

According to the interviewed project promoters and officers, the expectations concerning the number of the participation activists were not fulfilled, even if 80 and 100 people visited two important events. Nevertheless, in these interviews, the stakeholders, politicians and the public assessed the process as fair, the results as reliable, acceptable for most people and suitable to be implemented.

It was difficult to integrate the interest of senior citizens, however. It was also not possible to involve the migrants in the district with their group-specific interests (e.g. family leisure behaviour with picnic on the meadow). Both could be assisted by the support group, which continuously cooperated and tried to consider the concerns of these groups by "empathic representation". The support group succeeded to integrate the diverging interests and make their representatives talk with each other in a constructive atmosphere. Conflicts could be dealt with more easily because the counterpart could be seen in different roles, e.g. also private ones.

## 4.2 Listening to citizens at periodic neighbourhood meetings and through an Internet question tool in Ale (Sweden)

The municipality of Ale (27,000 inhabitants) emphasised that "listening to the citizen" was a special challenge for policy makers of the council as well as the administration, and that it was necessary to find durable modes of communication. Several exercises were conducted with two key elements: online question panels (Frågepanelen) and (physical) neighbourhood meetings.

Evening meetings are held twice a year in ten neighbourhoods. For each neighbourhood, the council appoints three politicians living there and a civil servant. After each meeting, this organising group reports to the municipal council about important topics. Minutes of the meetings are made available on the neighbourhood websites.<sup>5</sup>

At the beginning in 2005, the meetings were not as well prepared as they are today. They started very open especially with NIMBY issues brought up by the citizens. According to the panel, the quality of discussion heavily depended on the participants. Therefore, the meetings were better planned and became focussed on a small number of specific topics affecting the neighbourhood (e.g. noise, crime, spatial planning). Citizens had the opportunity to suggest topics for the next meeting either at the previous meeting or by using a special form on the website. Before each meeting, planning meetings with councillors and civil servants took place.

No decisions can be taken at these meetings, and there is also no specific budget available that the citizens could deal with. About 35 to 75 primarily middle-aged and older residents participated depending on the issues to be discussed. The relation of women to men has been quite equal, while the representation of immigrants is usually low. Politicians report that they get good insight and new ideas from these meetings.

Applying the set of evaluation dimensions listed in Table 1, enables us to conclude a first evaluation result:

Since 2008, the residents of Ale have the opportunity to use the Internet to ask questions to the councillors and to comment on their answers ([http://ale.yourvoice.se/fragepanelen\\_3.asp](http://ale.yourvoice.se/fragepanelen_3.asp)). Every political party has one responsible person to whom the questions of the "councillors' dialogue" are sent before they are published on the web. In their responses they are required to find a good balance between promoting democracy and promoting their separate political parties.<sup>6</sup> Within seven months, 55 questions were answered by four councillors on average. Since the panel is open for everyone, the complexity of questions varies from those about the municipality of Ale in general, to issues like the museums, taxes or environmental questions, about investments in Ale and about political priorities. Evaluation of the use of rich content interaction between users and policy makers, and among users, cannot yet be made – only ten responses of the politicians have been discussed further on (two of them with three or more postings).

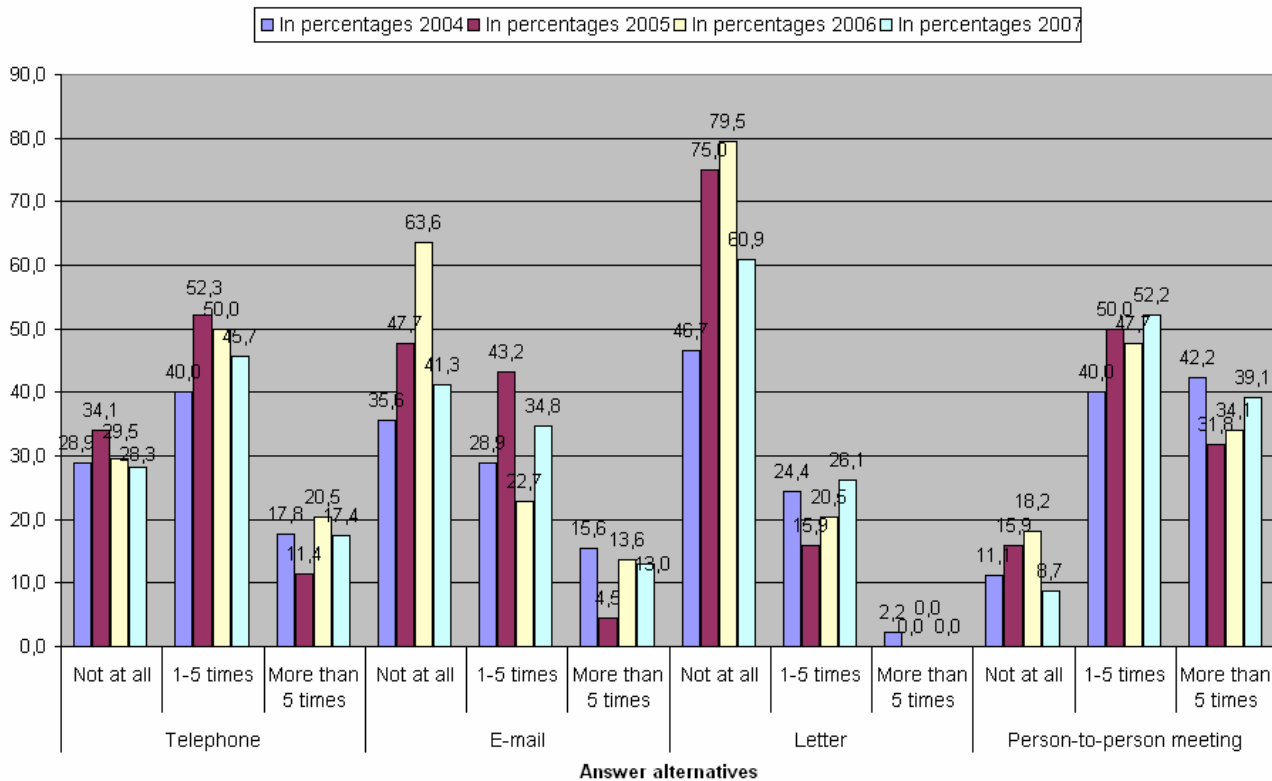
In this case, ICT tools clearly became more relevant for participation, especially to support the responsiveness of politicians. The low threshold of participation in the question panel (no registration required) invites more citizens to make statements, while the municipality's evaluation showed that the neighbourhood meetings are

---

5 E.g. <http://www.ale.se/webb/Polopav.nsf/doc/729B7D6AD47F7EB5C1256FF70033C994>

6 The tool is commercially provided (by [www.yourvoice.se](http://www.yourvoice.se)) and according to the company's website used in 25 Swedish municipalities until now.

typically attended by the elderly and domestic residents more than by younger residents and immigrants. But it is too early for a definitive assessment of the councillors' use of the tool.<sup>7</sup> Surveys conducted every year of Ale councillors regarding the channels they use to receive ideas and appeals from the citizens show that physical meetings remained the most important channel of contact to citizens during the last four years, followed by telephone and email, while letters are hardly used. It is also remarkable that these figures did not change significantly during the years surveyed. (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Contacts via different channels of Ale councillors to residents, 2004-2007 (Question to councillors: During the last month, have you been contacted by a citizen of Ale about political issues by telephone, e-mail, letter or person-to-person meeting? (n=44-47 councillors) (Source: Municipality of Ale)

Concluding, this case is characterised by durable integration of participation methods in the “agenda setting” and in the “policy formulation” stage of the decision making cycle and by a high degree of responsiveness by legal representatives. Unfortunately it is not yet possible to make final statements about how the Fragepanelen and the neighbourhood meetings as two means of participation fit together.

### 4.3 Accompanied and unaccompanied use of ICT in a consultation for village development planning in Dantumadeel (Netherlands)

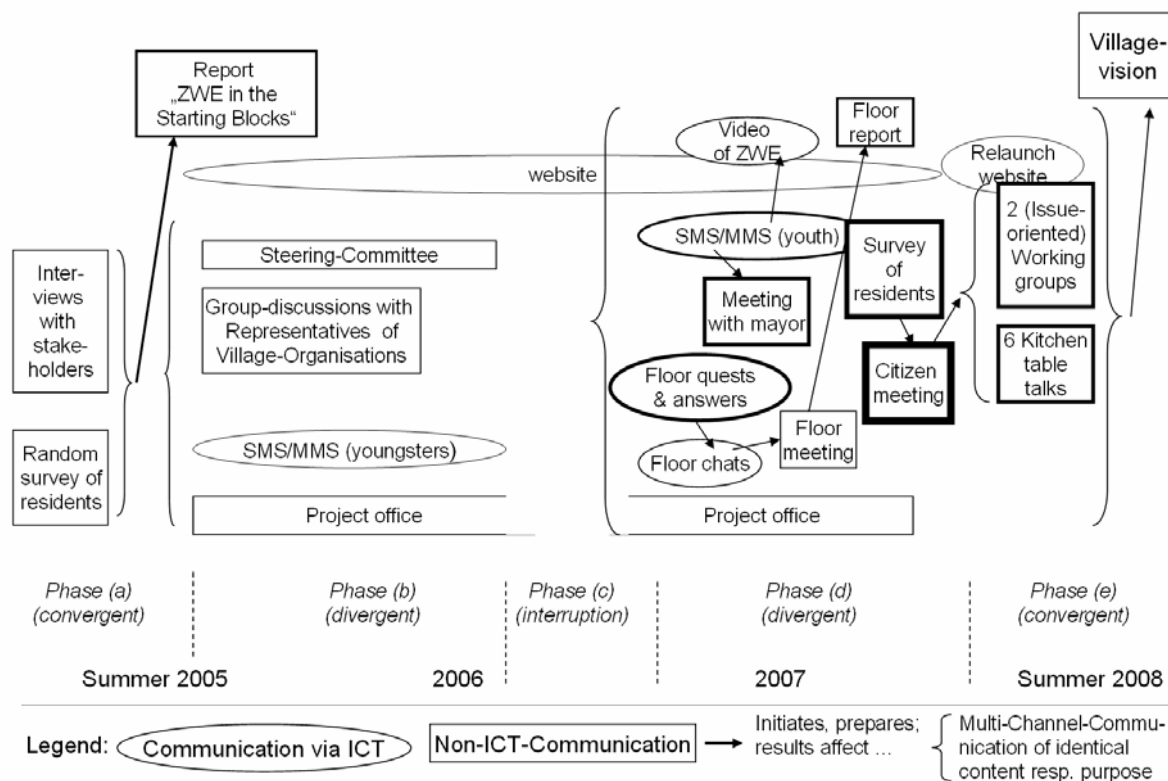
Between 2005 and 2008, the Dutch Municipality of Dantumadeel conducted a comprehensive consultation in the village of Zwaagwesteinde (ZWE) with the aim to develop a 15-year-vision of the village in the future. ZWE has 5,100 inhabitants and shows problematic social indicators such as high (youth) unemployment, problems with alcohol and other drugs, vandalism as well as by a pronounced scepticism towards politics and administration.

As illustrated in Figure 3, the procedure included (although not intended) five phases:

- A survey based on a random sample of citizens, interviews with multipliers and a report converging the first statements in a status-quo summary.

<sup>7</sup> According to municipality of Ale, there are no figures available about users of the tool.

- (b) Several diverging activities were started gathering opinions from different groups of residents using specific means of communication: focus groups with representatives of clubs, donating high-tech mobile phones with the service to youngsters in return that they had to reply to weekly SMS regarding questions from social workers.<sup>8</sup> During this phase, the municipality faced some management and technical problems, which caused a considerable delay.<sup>9</sup>
- (c) Solving this, a new webmaster was appointed in 2006 and another employee was hired for the socio-cultural aspects of the project and the SMS surveys. Again, a divergent phase
- (d) started with further trials approaching the youth and other residents with a survey and an information meeting about its results. These converged in the last phase,
- (e) in so-called kitchen table talks (focus groups) and issue-related working groups and resulted in a final report "Zwaagwesteinde in de Steigers. Dorpsvisie 2008-2023".



**Figure 3.** Communication mix in the participation procedure „Zwaagwesteinde“

In the final evaluation panel of Dantumadeel, the members concluded that the ICT-tools have been of relatively low relevance within the methods used in the process; the elements of most importance were the physical meetings resulting from the survey in phase (d). A crucial point was that the dispersed activities in the first two phases were not published and ideas were not exchanged. Compared to later measures, ICT potentials remained under-exploited in the first phases (see below). The mobile phone activities were only an indicator for this: In phase (b), the project staff continuously sent SMS with questions or little tasks to the 40 youths who had received mobile phones. Most questions tried to involve the youngsters in a discussion on themselves, their interests or the situation in the village. They answered via SMS, and via MMS, if the task was to take a photo of

8 This happened in cooperation with a mobile phone provider; the young people could also use them for private purposes. Additionally, they were refunded the prepaid fee of 5 EUR per month for sending MMS because the provider wanted to implement the technology. Sending of SMS was indirectly subsidized.

9 The young people had handling problems that could not be solved by the project team because it was not trained for such cases. Sending questions to the mobile phones by the project computer was often not possible. According to the webmaster, one reason for the low response rate could have been that the server of the mobile phone provider did not send the questions to all addressees depending on the server load, so that some youths did not receive any questions.

a certain object. The reply rate lay between 54% and 74% (relating to the "photo questions" (37% on average). In a study on behalf of the local government, Koerhuis & Schaafsma (2006) on the one hand maintain that young people liked the mobile phone project because it showed that the local government tried to increase their participation. On the other hand, however, it did not raise citizen participation as expected. The authors stated that half a year after the project began, the follow-up of the answers and suggestions was not optimal and needed improvement. They also made recommendations including for instance sending reminders, presenting the youngsters' answers on a website and by expanding the role young people play in the project (Koerhuis & Schaafsma 2006, own translation).

In phase (d), a new project officer strengthened the role of the website, by forwarding the answers the youth gave via SMS to the website and putting interviews and small movies about inhabitants of the village on the net. He also prepared a movie about the village together with the youngsters that was made available on the web. These activities significantly increased the number of visitors up to a peak of more than 3,000 unique page views in one month (this figure has to be seen in relation to the small population of ZWE). Responsiveness was improved and the youth participants were invited by the mayor and an alderman. Six youngsters used this opportunity and criticised the representatives for not drawing consequences from the answers of the youths for more than a year.

Supplementing the mobile phone project, for three months an innovative communication channel was incorporated for the youths using the commercial "Floor" method based on instant messaging. A member of the project team encouraged participants of the mobile project to register. Youths aged twelve to 21 received the "Floorquests" every two weeks – lists of questions on different subjects, e.g. their living conditions, leisure time activities, friendship or ideals for the future. These questions were answered by 39 to 48 out of 60 participants.<sup>10</sup> In additional chats on these subjects – moderated by Floor facilitators – four to six youths took part. The provider made available the intermediate results in a report to the local authority. It showed that the youths liked to have more meeting points, more (sports) activities and a swimming pool. Also traffic problems such as a crossing or more planting in the residential area were mentioned (Floor 2007). At the end of the episode, the provider organised a two-hour meeting in the village, where participating youths could become acquainted with each other. Twelve of them used the opportunity and discussed the question of what they think of the future of Dantumadeel and what the community should look like in future.<sup>11</sup>

#### 4.4 Conclusions after comparison of the three cases

In all three projects described, traditional face-to-face activities built the core of the participation procedures; whilst the ICT components were supplements (cf. Table 2). This is a quite realistic reproduction of the current situation local governments are confronted with when starting to use ICT for political participation. Even in a country with a very high Internet penetration rate, such as Sweden, physical meetings remain the most important contact channel for local politicians to citizens, followed by telephone and email.

**Table 2.** Extract of evaluation results regarding the multi-media-dialogue approach in three cases

Criteria	Indicators	Results		
		Stadionbad	Ale	Zwaagwesteinde
<i>Relevance of ICT-tools among method-combination</i>	<i>Usage rate</i>	Medium: website among the five most important methods; discussion forum not important	Frågepanelen (FP) not to be judged now (one of two tools)	Low: SMS/MMS / Floor / website not important for the process
	<i>Number of users</i>	Website: 600 visits per week (target audience: approximately 30,000)	FP: 55 questions within seven months; no data available about visitors (target audience: 27,000 inhabitants)	Website visited well when a civil servant took care for (445 per week), before: less than 100 unique visits per week (target audience: 5,100 inhabitants)
	<i>Target groups</i>	Youth reached (not via	More elderly and	Youth reached well using

<sup>10</sup> Depending on their participation in Floor, the young people got credits as a recompense that they could exchange for shopping vouchers.

<sup>11</sup> Every youth received a credit of 15 EUR for participating.

	<i>reached (social inclusiveness)</i>	ICT); difficult to integrate senior citizens and migrants (not via ICT)	domestic residents are attending neighbourhood (Nh) meetings than the youth and migrants / no data regarding ICT-tool	incentives via SMS/MMS-project and via Floor (Internet); other groups also via physical meetings, surveys and representatives
	<i>Content provided adequately</i>	Excellent via website: 129 (mostly self-written) articles and further 31 documents such as newspaper articles, protocols and plan drawings	Neighbourhood websites: invitations and minutes of neighbourhood meetings	Website not used as an instrument for pooling ideas of citizens or disseminating information (only at the end for a masterplan)
<i>Support of responsive-ness</i>	<i>The tool allows to answer the user's question quickly and effectively</i>	On the website, a q/a-tool was provided "Questions to Dr Wet": hardly used	FP enables direct link between users and politicians; for politicians, person-to-person meetings are most important, then telephone and email	SMS/MMS & Internet (Floor) not used responsively, only combined with mayor-meeting and final report; traditional methods were used responsively: survey results in well-visited meeting, focus-group work in final report
	<i>The site provides contact information, FAQs, search functions</i>	Only contact info	FP: Only contact info, Nh website: Form to suggest topics for next Nh-meeting	Website: Contact information, SMS/MMS with personally know contact persons
<i>Support of rich in content interaction between users and policy makers and among users</i>	<i>Quantity of postings</i>	Discussion forum: 50 contributions; 600 visits in six weeks	FP: 55 questions; approx. 220 replies	SMS-project: 640 answers; respondent-rates of 60%-35% (average) from 45 resp. 60 youth (declining); Floor: 70% of 60 participants responded;
	<i>Quality of comments</i>	Mostly constructive and well founded (10% threads with more than four comments)	FP: quality not to be judged now, one thread (out of 55) with more than three comments)	SMS/MMS: In random samples, 49 to 58% were (very) good answers (but no bi- or multilateral interaction possible)

As Table 3 exposes, the strength of the Internet mainly concerns its potential to provide transparency and to converge interests and information in a process through carefully elaborated websites. This is confirmed by feedback from actors involved in the process of Stadionbad and the example of the ZWE-website for the months it was accompanied professionally. Both for consultation and deliberation, in the cases presented face-to-face meetings were most important. But this does not mean that ICT played no role – not only because of the small size of this selected sample but also because of its important function in combined sets of tools and methods.

**Table 3.** Activities aimed at information, consultation and deliberation and online and offline methods used (*most important means of communication in the process are printed in bold*)

<i>Pilot site</i>	<b>Online</b>	<b>Offline</b>
Information		
<i>Stadionbad</i>	<b>Website</b> , newsletter, online map	Information meetings, inspection on site, excursion
<i>Ale</i>	(Neighbourhood) <b>Website</b>	<b>Neighbourhood meetings</b> twice a year
<i>ZWE</i>	Website (during six months)	Evening meeting

Consultation		
<i>Stadionbad</i>	Discussion forum	Excursions Hearing Future conferences; discussions with planners Meetings for target groups (evening meetings with senior citizens; women; persons with special needs; sports conference; <b>workshops in classes</b> and kindergardens)
<i>Ale</i>	Question panel	<b>Neighbourhood meetings; reports to council</b>
<i>ZWE</i>	Mobile phone questions to young people; answers on the Internet (phase d) Questionnaires through the Internet; moderated chats in small groups with 6-8 participants in closed domain	Survey of specific groups at the beginning Group interviews with associations and churches Project office with two employees <b>Discussion of mayor and alderman with youngsters</b> <b>Survey</b> of all households Evening meeting Issue-oriented working groups <b>Kitchen-table talks</b> (focus groups)
Deliberation		
<i>Stadionbad</i>	Discussion forum	<b>Moderated concept group („support group“)</b> <b>Externally moderated one day workshop</b> at the beginning and at the end
<i>ZWE</i>		<b>Working group</b> to summarize results of different participant events

In the Stadionbad case, the Internet discussion held in parallel with physical sessions with different target groups reflected quite closely the discussions in these offline activities; additionally it presented important different arguments regarding a crucial point of the conflict. The Zwaagwesteinde case illustrates how important it is to accompany the use of Internet and mobile phone postings in eParticipation-processes and to embed them in the whole process – in phase (b) of the project, when the answers of the youth were only collected but not compiled and forwarded or put on the website, they became upset. But when that happened in phase (d), when the mayor listened to their opinions in a (physical) meeting, their contributions became fruitful input for the final report. This illustrates that involving youths remains a complex task and cannot automatically be solved by using ICTs. In the Stadionbad case, teachers could be contacted, who in turn encouraged their students to participate. It was important that this was done during class. Therefore it was not a big surprise that this group did not get their information from the media (let alone the Internet) but from school as evaluated by survey.

## 5 Tentative evaluation framework

Evaluation is to generate information on results of an eParticipation project and its process organisation. Whether the focus is on outcomes (summative evaluation) or on process aspects (formative evaluation), both involve a systematic comparison with predefined criteria, performance standards or expectations. The scope of an evaluation activity can range from very small scale check, based on a few key evaluation questions, to a large scale evaluation study based on a detailed evaluation framework. Motivations for evaluating eParticipation projects can be quite varied. Organisational learning, management enhancement, audit and project control, assessment of tools, and enhancing democracy are among the most important interests.

Depending on which perspective is taken, determines evaluation questions, relevant criteria and evaluation designs. An integrative evaluation model which combines three different perspectives – a project perspective, a tool-oriented socio-technical perspective and a wider democracy perspective – has been suggested by Macintosh and Whyte (2008). This layered model has been further elaborated in the context of the European Network of Excellence DEMO-net by extending both the scope of the three basic perspectives and the set of criteria, indicators and measures needed for grasping the relevant information (DEMO-net 2008; Aichholzer & Allhutter 2008). The results of these efforts towards a more systematic evaluation framework offer a reference model both for the evaluation case studies presented above and practitioners interested in evaluating other projects. As explained above, our focus here is on the socio-technical perspective; therefore both the project

perspective and the democratic perspective shall only be outlined in basic dimensions very briefly (for details and further issues included in the framework please consult the DEMO-net sources referred to above).

## 5.1 Project perspective

The project perspective is usually seen as a centrepiece in evaluations. It looks at the specific aims, objectives and performance aspects of eParticipation projects as set by the project organisers or the management team. The set of relevant dimensions (criteria/sub-criteria) to be analysed may include the following:

### Project management

- Goal clarity; resource planning; responsibilities
- Quality of tool selection and implementation; resource efficiency
- Coordination of online and offline processes

### Engaging with a wider audience

- Promotion measures; outreach
- Incorporation of (multiple) target group perspectives in service design
- Accessibility; inclusiveness; barriers to participation

### Community development

- Participation and networking patterns

### Obtaining better-informed opinions

- Relevance and quality of information
- Learning effects over the participation process

### Process quality

- Gap analysis against standards and good practice
- User and stakeholder identified areas for enhancement
- Integration of online and offline processes
- Harmonisation of work-practices of authority and eParticipation processes

### Scope of deliberation

- Extent of interaction amongst participants; level of involvement
- Extent of rationality and use of arguments

### Effectiveness

- Cost/time effectiveness of processes and structures (e.g. cost savings/time savings in providing, aggregating and evaluating input)

### Feedback behaviour

- Response measures set by project organisers; rates and timeliness of response
- Feedback content and quality; participants' satisfaction with feedback

### Sustainability

- Level of key stakeholder support; provision of resources and maintenance
- Stakeholder perception of continuity barriers
- Level of institutionalisation of education and training for government officials

## 5.2 Socio-technical perspective

The second core component of the suggested framework, the socio-technical perspective, is largely framed by the perspective of users and includes a specific focus on the employed electronic tools. It can be grouped under three key dimensions – *social acceptability*, *usefulness*, and *usability* and is exhibited in Table 4 in more detail, i.e. including operational measurement aspects.

**Table 4: Criteria and operational measures for evaluating eParticipation from a socio-technical perspective**

<b>Criteria/Sub-criteria</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Measures and methods</b>
<b>Social acceptability</b>		
Trust and security	Information is presented accurately, completely and reliably	Expert or stakeholder assessment, participant survey
	Information users have provided is handled in a secure manner	Specialist or stakeholder assessment
	Users are confident in the steps taken	Participant survey, interviews
	Data handling procedures are in compliance with relevant legislation or guidelines	Expert or stakeholder assessment
Relevance and legitimacy	Tool meets a purpose relevant to individual users' and community's needs	Participant survey, interviews
	Content and surrounding processes are relevant to that purpose	Expert or stakeholder assessment, participant survey, interviews
<b>Usefulness</b>		
Accessibility	Level of compliance with Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) content guidelines is sufficient to serve users with special needs	Assessment against accessibility checklists (or if not available: specialist or stakeholder assessment)
	Alternative access over public access points, mobile devices or offline channels is possible	Expert or stakeholder assessment
	Identification of access barriers	Interviews
Appeal and usage	Public take-up relative to expectations	Interviews (beforehand), web metrics
	Target users are satisfied with the tool, show interest in using it and willingness to return to the site	Satisfaction ratings, user survey
	Identification of usage barriers	User survey, focus groups
	Number of users, extent/frequency of their use of the tool	Web metrics
Content clarity	Users understand what the content means in the context of the task or situation	User survey, interviews, usability testing
Responsiveness	Tool allows to answer the user's questions quickly and effectively	User survey, website analysis
	Site provides contact information, FAQs, search functions	Website analysis
Interaction	Tool supports the level of interaction required by the process	Website & content analysis, expert or stakeholder assessment
Good practice	Level of consistency with current developments, good practice guidelines, standards in the field (e.g. interoperability standards)	Evaluator assessment informed by document and literature review
<b>Usability</b>		
Navigation and	Sufficient and consistent information about users' current position on the site, path taken,	Usability testing

organisation	and available options	
Efficiency and flexibility	Time needed to perform a task	Usability testing
	Appropriate short-cuts for doing repetitive or familiar tasks	Usability testing
	Adequate fit with variations of individual circumstances	Usability testing, user survey
Error recovery	Users can undo previous actions	Usability testing, user assessment
	Users are guided effectively on the correct procedure and can continue the task without distraction or hesitation	Usability testing, user assessment
System security	Level of stability of operation without unintended interruption or periods of maintenance	Rates of service provision; user assessments

### 5.3 Democratic perspective

This third component concentrates on perhaps the most demanding task, i.e. assessing how far eParticipation contributes to improving the quality of democratic systems and processes. Difficulties arise especially for three reasons: a) democracy is itself a contested concept, b) some impacts on democracy tend to be effective only in the longer-term, depending on significance and scale of a project and c) multiple levels of impact need to be assessed and separated from other influence factors. Nevertheless an assessment from this perspective is essential for any interest in policy evaluation with regard to effects on democracy. Some basic evaluation dimensions may include the following:

#### Representation

- Fit with legal frameworks/legal stipulation for participation procedure
- Integration with 'offline' participation channels
- Fairness of interest representation

#### Support of engagement

- Availability of information on democratic processes and rules of (e-)participation
- Citizens' knowledge about participation opportunities/existing initiatives
- Knowledge increase about democratic processes and rules of (e-)participation
- Participation supply and demand (number of initiatives, access numbers, active membership in networks or interest groups)
- Level of citizen involvement of in identifying subjects of eParticipation

#### Transparency and accountability

- Publication of contributions to/results of participation process
- Public discussion on final results with involved actors
- Transparency on involved actors and responsibilities
- Transparency on how contributions are processed and decisions taken

#### Conflict and consensus

- Identification of "pros and cons"; handling/visibility of minority opinions
- Participation policies (e.g., moderation, etc.)

#### Political equality

- Pluralism, openness of participation process
- Contribution to reduce barriers to participation or barriers to active citizenship

#### Community control

- Participant satisfaction with participation effects

- Impact on decision-making process; level of integration into policy process

Each of these three evaluation perspectives is open for further relevant criteria to be included. For instance, the democratic perspective might also be interested in more long-term effects on participation in formal political institutions, the relationship between the electorate and the political system or in turnout at elections. It is not suggested, and in fact would be misleading, to view this framework as a toolbox from which any element could be taken according to individual evaluation needs ready for application. This could not be done without consideration of the project context, appropriate adaptation to it and further elaboration of the evaluation criteria. The purpose of the framework rather is to complement and extend the scope of evaluation perspectives and to stimulate and enrich ideas for individual evaluation intentions on eParticipation projects.

## 6 Challenges to apply the framework in eParticipation practice

Applying (preliminary) frameworks for the evaluation of (e)participation in practical contexts faces several challenges. These will first be illustrated with reference to the EVOICE project and then related to the general situation in evaluating eParticipation.

In the EVOICE project, two research designs as described in the evaluation framework were applied. First, a (trans-national) comparative approach, and second the evaluation of combined offline and online tools. The project's pretension to explore similar cases initiating "a learning process of experimentation, evaluation, improvement, second evaluation, second improvement, etc." is difficult to be realised in eParticipation practice. The pilot projects in this four years programme differed in so many respects, and it would not have been possible to harmonise variables such as objective, topic, target group, resources and methods. Even if some of these variables could not be harmonised, the others would make them like comparing apples and oranges. E.g. if the objective is to compare the usability or functionality of a specific tool in different contexts, results depend on the latter and cannot be taken as evidence for the performance of the tool for the following reasons:

- In *trans-national contexts*, evaluation has often been conducted as "*remote*" and "*mediated*" evaluation: The principal investigator is not or only partially the same researching on site. This is plausible because it reduces both the justifiable effort and potential interest bias: it solves the evaluator-involved actor-problem because it is even better for objectivity reasons not to have identical persons or institutions who conduct the eParticipation exercise and who observe it (cf. Macintosh & Coleman 2006). On the other hand, remote and mediated evaluation often has to rely on civil servants as mediators and their honesty to deliver valid and reliable data. This can also be critical because of their dependence on good results of the evaluation for further funding, or additional effort implied with data collection.
- Trans-national and specifically remote and mediated evaluation has to face cultural and technical challenges. In addition to language problems, cultural challenges include for instance apparently self-evident circumstances. While in the Nordic countries freedom of information is a long-standing practice, other countries have a more hierarchical relationship between civil servants and citizens; we can also observe different understandings of terms such as "consultation" which in Central Europe also includes discursive and deliberative portions but less in the UK. Different attention to privacy issues is also covered, e.g. when the German partner was not allowed to count "visits" because the IP-addresses had to be stored longer than allowed. Technical challenges can be different standards for units to analyse log files, or different support software for the different grammars necessary to make natural language processing tools operable.

Also the evaluation design of *combined offline and online channels* has to solve specific problems:

"Need of resources" is a basic challenge: Evaluations of combined offline and online participation forms tend to be resource intensive and require careful tailoring of evaluation designs according available means. External as compared to internal evaluations generally imply additional costs. From a scientific point of view, an external evaluation is necessary to guarantee independence and scientific standards. Against this there are two arguments: Institutional separation between organiser and evaluator is not a guarantee for independence because of the potential dependence of the evaluator on the client. Secondly, evaluation should become an internal mechanism to monitor a project's own processes, both to save resources and to build up institutional knowledge about evaluating eParticipation. A framework as presented above can be a first step.

Data availability is another basic issue. Sometimes suitable data for evaluation purposes are not available due to cost constraints or for privacy reasons. Organisers have to weigh between keeping participation thresholds as low as possible and the generation of data about participation activities. Doing without registration, allowing nicknames and the resulting anonymity reduce the potential data pool for later evaluation. On the other hand

separate surveys among (non)users are costly. Log file data can be inaccessible when a tool runs on the server of an external provider and detailed data delivery is not part of the contract.

In other cases different responsibilities within government have to be faced and the implicit competition among units. Civil servants from the IT-unit involved in the project might depend on the motivation of colleagues in other units that don't benefit from funding or the outcome of the project.

Transcending a supply side perspective is a general challenge of eParticipation research. Often the providers' view is taken but not the users' or even the non-users' perspective. The absence of information about the users is a crucial point in evaluating the contribution of ICT.

A specific challenge is the evaluation of the democratic implications of eParticipation. The implementation of its results can be seen as the short-term impact of a participation project, but as the criteria above show there is also a long-run perspective. One problem here is isolating the impact of the project per se from other factors influencing people's political attitudes.<sup>12</sup> A necessary task is identifying appropriate levels of expectable democracy effects – organisational, local, regional, societal or global – as well as grasping longer-term effects.

Another challenge is to adequately take account of the context in which a particular eParticipation project is embedded. As stressed by Rowe and Frewer (2004), participation projects "do not take place in a vacuum but within particular contexts." These contexts frame participation processes, and projects are designed to fit the political, cultural and socio-economic environment in which they take place. Thus, every evaluation should carefully examine the relevant context and evaluation designs, as well as take into account criteria such as level of government, level of citizens' engagement, political culture, rationale that gave rise to the project, etc. Especially when comparing evaluation results from different eParticipation initiatives the question of how and to what extent context matters becomes crucial (see DEMO-net 2008).

Finally, a related challenge concerns necessary adaptations to the specific type of eParticipation in question. For a project with primarily deliberative functions, quite different criteria are relevant and need to be specified than for e.g. an eConsultation or an ePolling project.

## 7 Conclusions

Evaluation of eParticipation is important for several reasons. Generally it is indispensable if knowledge of greater precision and objectivity is wanted about the effectiveness, the value, the success of an eParticipation project, initiative or programme. Evaluation helps ascertain to what extent certain objectives have been fulfilled or why they have not. Insights allow identifying deficits and shortcomings, as well as leverage for change and thus for organisational learning, improved management and utilisation of this knowledge in future eParticipation projects. Other important functions are audit and project control. With regard to electronic tools, the centrepiece of eParticipation, evaluation is necessary to optimise the socio-technical design and set-up both from the providers' and the users' point of view. Last but not least, evaluation is required to detect whether and to what extent an eParticipation project does contribute to enhancing democracy. Evaluation has been distinguished from assessment as a systematic analysis against preset criteria. It goes beyond mere descriptive documentation of eParticipation projects and requires specifying these criteria in advance as well as determining suitable indicators and their measurement.

This article focussed on government-driven eParticipation activities especially within the area of consultation and deliberation. The layered model of our evaluation framework with distinguished criteria, indicators and methods is an important step to support "real" evaluation compared to assessment – both done by external scientists and by internal staff to improve the public administrations' institutional knowledge. We are aware of the principle problems of such a framework – that it is either too comprehensive and therefore not coming to the point for practitioners, or that always some aspects are missing which are seen as relevant for the case in discussion – but we rely on the competence of the users of the framework to adapt it to their specific needs. We addressed this theory-practice tension when we described the evaluation method and the problems extracted from an extensive eParticipation project. Here two research designs were combined – comparative and offline-online synthesising methods. Some principle challenges of a comparative design are the difficulty in finding comparable cases, cultural and technical differences, advantages and disadvantages of remote and mediated evaluation. The design of combined offline and online tools, especially resource and data problems, and cooperation demands among government agencies, were addressed.

---

12 In EVOICE, „building capacities for eParticipation" within the institution was taken as a middle-term impact indicator.

Independent from the design, the effort to take into account the users' perspectives was highlighted. Further research is necessary, e.g. regarding the democratic layer of the framework and regarding the impact of eParticipation exercises.

## References

- Aichholzer, G. & Allhutter, D. (2008). Evaluation Perspectives and Key Criteria in eParticipation, Proceedings of 6th Eastern European eGovernment Days, April 23-25, 2008, Prague, Czech republic, electronic publication available at OCG, Vienna: OCG – Oesterreichische Computer Gesellschaft.
- Coppedge, M. & Reinicke, W. H. (1990). Measuring polyarchy. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 25(1), 51-72.
- DEMO-net (2007). Tambouris, E.; Macintosh, A.; Coleman, St.; Wimmer, M.; Vedel, T.; Westholm, H.; Lippa, B.; Dalakiouridou, E.; Parisopoulos, K.; Rose, J.; Aichholzer, G.; Winkler, R. (2007). Introducing eParticipation, DEMO-net booklet series, no. 1, retrieved December 3, 2008 from [http://www.ifib.de/publikationsdateien/Introducing\\_eParticipation\\_DEMO-net\\_booklet\\_1.pdf](http://www.ifib.de/publikationsdateien/Introducing_eParticipation_DEMO-net_booklet_1.pdf)
- DEMO-net (2008). Lippa, B.; Aichholzer, G.; Allhutter, D.; Freschi, A.C.; Macintosh, A.; Moss, G.; Westholm, H. (2008). eParticipation Evaluation and Impact. DEMO-net booklet 13.3. Bremen/Leeds 2008, retrieved December 3, 2008 from [http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/Research/CdC/CdC%20Publications/DEMONet\\_booklet\\_13.3\\_eParticipation\\_evaluation.pdf](http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/Research/CdC/CdC%20Publications/DEMONet_booklet_13.3_eParticipation_evaluation.pdf).
- Dennis, A.R. & Valacich, J.S. (1999). Rethinking Media Richness: Towards a Theory of Media Synchronicity. Paper presented at the 32nd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, Los Alamitos: IEEE.
- Diamond, L. & Morlino, L. (Eds.) (2005). *Assessing the Quality of Democracy*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- EVOICE (2004). Final Application Form to the European Regional Development Fund Interreg IIIB (internal document, not published).
- Floor (2007). Tussenevaluatie jongerenparticipatie Dantumadeel. Intermediate result of the Floor activities in Dantumadeel 2006-2007. Groningen (internal document, not published).
- Frewer, L. J. & Rowe, G. (2005). Evaluating Public Participation Exercises: Strategic and Practical Issues. In OECD (ed.) *Evaluating Public Participation in Policy Making*, Paris: OECD, 85-108.
- Henderson M., Henderson. P. & Associates (2005). E-democracy evaluation framework. Unpublished manuscript.
- Janssen, D. & Kies, R. (2005), 'Online Forums and Deliberative Democracy', *Acta Politica* 40, 317-335.
- Koerhuis, S. & Schaafsma, R. (2006). International Office Management. Onderzoek Mobieltjesproject "Heel het dorp" gemeente Dantumadeel. Leeuwarden (January 2006), retrieved December 3, 2008 from <http://www.134.102.220.38/evoice/assets/includes/sendtext.cfm/aus.5/key.182>
- Kubicek, H., Lippa, B. & Westholm, H. (with cooperation of Kohlrausch, N.) (2007). Medienmix in der lokalen Demokratie. Die Integration von Online-Elementen in Verfahren der Bürgerbeteiligung. Final report to the Hans-Böckler-Foundation, Bremen, retrieved December 3, 2008 from [http://www.ifib.de/projekte-detail.html?id\\_projekt=135&detail=Medienmix%20in%20der%20lokalen%20Demokratie](http://www.ifib.de/projekte-detail.html?id_projekt=135&detail=Medienmix%20in%20der%20lokalen%20Demokratie).
- Macintosh, A. & Coleman, S. (2006). Multidisciplinary roadmap and report on eParticipation research. Demo-net deliverable D4.2, retrieved December 4, 2008 from [http://itc.napier.ac.uk/ITC/Documents/Demo-net%204\\_2\\_multidisciplinary\\_roadmap.pdf](http://itc.napier.ac.uk/ITC/Documents/Demo-net%204_2_multidisciplinary_roadmap.pdf)
- Macintosh, A. & Whyte, A. (2008). Towards an Evaluation Framework for eParticipation. *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 2(1), 16-30.
- Pina, V., Torres, L. & Royo, S. (2007). Are ICTs improving transparency and accountability in the EU regional and local governments? An empirical study. *Public Administration*, 85(2), 449-472.
- Rowe, G. & Frewer, L. J. (2000). Public Participation Methods: A Framework for Evaluation. *Science, Technology, & Human Value*, 25(1), 3-29.
- Rowe, G. & Frewer, L. J. (2004). Evaluating Public-Participation Exercises: A Research Agenda. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 29(4), 512-557.
- Rowe, G. & Gammack, J. G. (2004). Electronic engagement. Promise and perils of electronic public engagement, *Science and Public Policy* 31(1), 39-54.
- Schmitter, P. C. (2005). The Ambiguous Virtues of Accountability. In: Diamond, L. & Morlino, L. (Eds.): *Assessing the Quality of Democracy*, Baltimore. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 18-31.

- Skelcher, C., Mathur, N. & Smith, M. (2005). The Public Governance of Collaborative Spaces: Discourse, Design and Democracy. *Public Administration*, 83(3), 573-596.
- United Nations (Ed.) (2005). *Global E-Government Readiness Report 2005*. From E-Government to E-Inclusion, New York: United Nations.
- United Nations (Ed.) (2008). *UN E-Government Survey 2008*. From E-Government to Connected Governance, New York: United Nations.
- Warburton, D., Willson, R. & Rainbow, E. (2007). *Making a Difference: A guide to evaluating public participation in central government*. London, retrieved December 3, 2008 from <http://www.involve.org.uk/evaluation/Making%20a%20Difference%20-%20A%20guide%20to%20evaluating%20public%20participation%20in%20centralgovernment.pdf>.
- Westholm, H. (2008). End-of-project Evaluation of the Interreg III B project EVOICE. Bremen, October 2008, retrieved December 3, 2008 from [http://www.ifib.de/publikationsdateien/EVOICE\\_end-of-project\\_evaluation\\_report\\_fin.pdf](http://www.ifib.de/publikationsdateien/EVOICE_end-of-project_evaluation_report_fin.pdf)
- Winkler, R. (2007). e-Participation in Comparison and Contrast: Online debates at the EU's platform 'Your Voice in Europe'. In Remenyi, D. (ed.), *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on e-Government*, University of Quebec at Montreal, Canada, 26-28 September 2007. Dublin: Academic Conferences International, 238-248.

## Authors

[Georg Aichholzer](#)

Senior scientist and project director  
Institute of Technology Assessment, Austrian Academy of Sciences  
<http://www.epractice.eu/people/948>

[Hilmar Westholm](#)


Guest scientist  
Institute of Technology Assessment, Austrian Academy of Sciences  
[westholm@arcor.de](mailto:westholm@arcor.de)  
<http://www.epractice.eu/people/16876>

The European Journal of ePractice is a digital publication on eTransformation by ePractice.eu, a portal created by the European Commission to promote the sharing of good practices in eGovernment, eHealth and eInclusion.

Edited by P.A.U. Education, S.L.

Web: [www.epracticejournal.eu](http://www.epracticejournal.eu)

Email: [editorial@epractice.eu](mailto:editorial@epractice.eu)

 The texts published in this journal, unless otherwise indicated, are subject to a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.5 licence. They may be copied, distributed and broadcast provided that the author and the e-journal that publishes them, European Journal of ePractice, are cited. Commercial use and derivative works are not permitted. The full licence can be consulted on <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/>