eParticipation in Dutch Municipalities

A measurement tool for the online participation of citizens

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Foreword

This thesis report is the end product of my SEPAM Masters’ Graduation Project. During this half year period I have learned much about the field of eParticipation but also on a personal level.

I was fortunate in being selected as an intern within Berenschot; they provided a productive and enjoyable setting in which to do my research. My supervisor at Berenschot, Mark Leenaerts, was a key figure in my positive experiences there, and I would like to thank him for all his advice and help during this period.

I would like to thank my 1st supervisor at the ICT section of TBM, Anne Fleur van Veenstra, for her practical and informal approach to supervising; encouraging me to persevere in searching out my own answers, but giving just the right amount of advice when needed. I would also like to express my gratitude to my two 2nd supervisors in the POLG section of TBM. Before he left TBM, Arthur van Bilsen provided an outside perspective on the field of eParticipation with good advice on research methods and writing styles. Martijn Groenleer replaced Arthur in the later stage of the project, but nevertheless supplied a much needed critical viewpoint on the content and clarity of my research. As chairperson, Marijn Janssen was supportive in providing constructive criticism during my research.

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Summary

Context and Problem Description
An important element in serving the citizens of any democratic nation is to understand their needs and perceptions about the issues they find important; yet many citizens lack an interest and feel dissatisfied with politics. Traditional channels like the newspaper and town hall meetings are decreasing in popularity among citizens, especially younger ones. The utilization of Internet and Communication Technologies (ICT), in the form of eGovernment, can help to remedy this situation by providing a complementary alternative to current offline systems and methods. The concept of eParticipation is one branch of eGovernment and is focused specifically on the participation of citizens in the policy forming processes of the government. Often the first point of contact for citizens is the municipality. This is an important level of government for eParticipation as citizens feel they are more personally involved and have a greater expectation about the effect of their participation in their municipality.

eParticipation is the most recent step in empowering citizens to protect their rights and have their voices heard by the government. There is a general belief that utilizing eParticipation will help to bridge the gap between citizens and the government, in order to build better and more supported policy. An example of this is the use of a website polling process where residents are invited to vote on several alternatives outside of the discussions during town hall meetings. Relatively fewer people can or want to be present during such a meeting, but in their own time they can read about the issues on the website and cast their vote. Another example is a forum where citizens can post their issues or ideas in a thread which can be discussed by other citizens and officials.

What then is the added value of measuring the level of eParticipation? In this field, measurements are often an attempt to quantify or operationalize a complex and “soft” system. Breaking down such a subject into smaller and measureable parts can provide greater insight into the system. The benefits of such measurement include being able to compare the current situation with the desired situation, analyzing the costs and benefits of investments, and providing motivation for future developments in the field. The effects of policy can also be tested and the competitive nature surrounding benchmarks can drive investments further.

As the field of eParticipation is in the experimentation phase with a wide range of experiments and projects occurring, these efforts need to be converged and analyzed in order to provide a more complete evaluation of the current status of eParticipation within municipalities. Specifically, an overview is needed of the direction municipal eParticipation investments are heading with regard to the types of media being used and how these are being used to interact with citizens. Such analysis can bring much needed insight and understanding about eParticipation for municipalities. For this reason the following research question is addressed within this thesis:

How can the current state of eParticipation within Dutch municipalities be measured?
Research Method

This research project utilizes Herder’s Design Cycle as an overall research methodology, with several other individual methods chosen for the collection and analysis of data and information. The research method first focuses on building design requirements and specifications based on desk research on the subject of eParticipation. This includes an evaluation of previous benchmarks and proposed frameworks for eParticipation measurement. This evaluation provides the basis for a set of requirements for which a measurement tool was made. The designed prototype was discussed and evaluated by internal experts at Berenschot, external experts in the field, and a selection of municipal case studies. The resulting measurement tool assesses the current state of eParticipation within Dutch municipalities through 3 main design components:

- In the ICT Facilitation aspect, a selection of media forms was found and categorized as standard, innovative, or experimental. The participation ladder (informing, consulting, advising, coproducing, and co-deciding) was also used to categorize all the media forms according to the types of participation they best supported. These aspects provide results on the patterns and types of participatory strategy that municipalities are facilitating through the choice and quality of their media forms.

- In the Citizen Inclusion aspect, web behavior in the form of Forrester’s Social Technographics Roles is used to characterize citizens according to the possible roles they fulfill on the website (spectators, joiners, collectors, critics, and creators). These roles are related to age and gender demographics, and while it was not possible to create a useful measurement for these aspects, they are included as an open case study interview question about municipal demographic strategies. The social technographic roles themselves are linked to specific media forms based on their relevance and multiplied by the ICT Facilitation scores. In this way municipalities could see what types of roles they were focused on (and how well) with their choice of media forms.

- The last aspect is the Municipal Organization. Due to the recommendations of previous researchers and the link with policy-formation, the processes relevant for eParticipation are defined as the 5 stages in the policy cycle (agenda-setting, analysis, policy creation, implementation, and monitoring). These are connected to the participation ladder, thereby indicating which types of participation are most relevant during each stage of the policy cycle. Additional factors were defined, and while not transformed into indicators, they were used as part of the case study interviews. These include factors such as the level of awareness, the level of training available, and the level of resources available. Municipalities were also asked to reflect on the roles and relationships between municipal departments, such as the Communication and ICT departments for example.

The initial assessment of the status of eParticipation comes in two forms: the outcomes of the measurement tool itself based on the data of the website, and the outcomes of the case study interviews.

Measurement Tool Results

- The highest scoring municipality is Almere with 36.8% of a possible 100% with an average score of 21.9%.
  - These score levels were expected due to the broad range of tested media forms, but also because the use of eParticipation within municipalities is still in its infancy. Almost every tested municipality has more standard media forms than innovative ones, and more innovative media forms than experimental ones. Within the 17 municipalities there are few examples to be found of experimental media (virtual worlds, simulation/gaming, etc.)
• Of the media forms which are used, most are focused on Informing and Consulting, the lowest two levels on the participation ladder. This is likely due to the added effort and resources needed to facilitate deeper interaction, but also because of the underlying uncertainty about effectiveness and obstacles which prevent the municipality from committing to higher forms of eParticipation.

• This same pattern extends itself to the type of roles which the chosen media forms support; these are namely the Spectator and Joiner roles which require less effort to facilitate for municipalities, while the Critic and Creator roles require the municipality to commit more resources and effort to more complex discussions and interaction. The case study interviews underscored this hesitation for heavy investments at their current stages.

Case Study Results
The case study municipalities have a positive perception about eParticipation in general, although an abundance of uncertainty exists about the exact role it should play within municipalities. All the municipalities could generally identify themselves with the scores they received through the measurement tool however. Some of the outcomes which came to light during the interviews are likely to be critical aspects in most Dutch municipalities; these outcomes are reiterated below.

• Most of the interviewed municipalities agree that eParticipation is useful in complementing offline participation. It extends the range of insight into interests of citizens, but the uncertainty lies in when to use what. Do the media forms used for eParticipation on the municipal website stand alone or are they connected to municipal projects or both? There is also the possibility to focus only on eParticipation in projects and not use the municipal website at all.

• The interviewed municipalities are experimenting and have general objectives for eParticipation, but these are often hard to translate into formal plans and responsibilities within the organization. This is reflected in a general lack of formal training strategies. This can also be seen in the possible tension between the Communication and ICT departments, as their objectives for the municipal website can sometimes be at odds (secure website vs. communication platform). Furthermore, the role of municipal administrators in eParticipation is uncertain in an environment where the issues can often quickly become political in nature. The rules are currently very limited for them, yet they are often the most involved members of the municipal organization. Should they be allowed to interact with citizens through social media, and if so, what are the rules?

This research characterizes itself as an exploratory endeavor; this is reflected in the methods chosen to develop an answer to the research question on how the state of eParticipation should be measured. This represents one of the first attempts to create a functional measurement tool/benchmark specifically for eParticipation outside of an eGovernment context. The working benchmarks which exist currently are primarily focused on the citizen as a client under the heading of eGovernment. Where eParticipation is present, it is limited in scope and depth. The strength of this research is that it moves a step forward by identifying specific eParticipation elements such as the types of media forms and the types of user roles which exist and operationalizes these aspects. While the measurement tool has not been implemented throughout all municipalities, it was tested with 17 municipal websites and 6 more in-depth case studies.
# Table of Contents

**FOREWORD** ........................................................................................................... 3  
**SUMMARY** ............................................................................................................... 4  
**LIST OF FIGURES** ................................................................................................. 9  
**LIST OF TABLES** ................................................................................................. 11  

## 1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................... 12  
1.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE ....................................................................................... 13  
1.2 THESIS STRUCTURE .......................................................................................... 15  

## 2 RESEARCH PROBLEM .......................................................................................... 16  
2.1 RESEARCH CONTEXT ......................................................................................... 16  
2.1.1 What is eParticipation? ..................................................................................... 16  
2.1.2 Objectives and Issues Underlying eParticipation ............................................ 18  
2.1.3 Willingness to Participate and Where .............................................................. 19  
2.1.4 Why Measure eParticipation? ......................................................................... 21  
2.2 PROBLEM RELEVANCE ..................................................................................... 24  
2.2.1 What is the Social Relevance? ......................................................................... 24  
2.2.2 What is the Academic Relevance? ................................................................... 24  
2.3 PROBLEM DEFINITION ...................................................................................... 25  
2.3.1 Demarcation of the Research Environment .................................................... 25  
2.3.2 Knowledge Gaps and Problem Statement ....................................................... 26  
2.4 RESEARCH QUESTION ....................................................................................... 27  
2.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ............................................................................. 29  
2.5.1 Herder’s Design Cycle ..................................................................................... 29  
2.5.2 Desk Research ................................................................................................ 30  
2.5.3 Interviews ....................................................................................................... 30  
2.5.4 Case Studies .................................................................................................... 31  

## 3 EPARTICIPATION ELEMENTS – WHAT TO MEASURE? ...................................... 33  
3.1 EPARTICIPATION MEASUREMENT TOOLS AND BENCHMARKS ................ 33  
3.1.1 UN eGovernment Survey ................................................................................. 33  
3.1.2 Overheid.nl Monitor ......................................................................................... 35  
3.1.3 Aichholzer Framework for Evaluating eDemocracy ......................................... 36  
3.1.4 Loukis eParticipation Evaluation Framework ................................................ 37  
3.1.5 Berenschot Ibalans Measurement Tool ............................................................ 39  
3.2 OTHER USEFUL RESEARCH ELEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ........ 39  
3.2.1 Commitment and Other Organizational Aspects within Municipalities ......... 39  
3.2.2 Measurement Recommendations ................................................................. 40  
3.2.3 Other Recommendations ................................................................................ 41  
3.3 REQUIREMENTS FOR DESIGN ......................................................................... 42  

## 4 DESIGN OF THE MEASUREMENT TOOL .................................................................... 44  
4.1 MEASUREMENT TOOL PART 1 – ICT FACILITATION ....................................... 44  
4.1.1 Selection of ICT Media Forms ......................................................................... 44  
4.1.2 Categorizing the Forms of eParticipation ....................................................... 46  
4.1.3 Visualizing the ICT Facilitation Outcomes ...................................................... 47  
4.2 MEASUREMENT TOOL PART 2 – CITIZEN INCLUSION .................................. 47  
4.2.1 Classifying Citizen Types and Behavior ......................................................... 47  
4.2.2 Relationship with ICT Facilitation ................................................................. 51  
4.2.3 Visualizing the Citizen Inclusion Outcomes .................................................... 51  
4.3 MEASUREMENT TOOL PART 3 – MUNICIPAL ORGANIZATION .................... 51  
4.3.1 Participation Forms and the Policy Cycle ......................................................... 51  
4.3.2 Important Themes and Success Factors for eParticipation ............................ 53  
4.3.3 Municipal Roles and Relationships ................................................................. 53  
4.3.4 Visualizing the Municipal Organization Outcomes ....................................... 54  
4.4 DESIGN CONCLUSIONS ....................................................................................... 54
5 VERIFICATION AND EVALUATION ........................................................................................................55
  5.1 VERIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF THE MEASUREMENT TOOL ..................................................55
    5.1.1 Excel Verification .....................................................................................................................55
    5.1.2 Excel Evaluation .....................................................................................................................55
  5.2 EVALUATION BY EXPERTS .............................................................................................................56
  5.3 CASE STUDY EVALUATION ..............................................................................................................57

6 MEASUREMENT AND ANALYSIS OF EPARTICIPATION ...................................................................58
  6.1 MEASUREMENT TOOL OUTCOMES ..................................................................................................58
    6.1.1 Raw Data Analysis .....................................................................................................................58
    6.1.2 The Municipal Scores ..............................................................................................................71
  6.2 CASE STUDY OUTCOMES ..................................................................................................................80
    6.2.1 Municipal Characteristics .........................................................................................................80
    6.2.2 eParticipation as a Concept ......................................................................................................82
    6.2.3 Organizational Aspects within eParticipation ..........................................................................84
    6.2.4 Municipal Roles and Relationships ..........................................................................................85
    6.2.5 Demographic Strategy .............................................................................................................86
    6.2.6 Municipal Experiences and Lessons Learned ..........................................................................87
  6.3 REFLECTION ON EVALUATION FEEDBACK .....................................................................................87

7 CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ............................................................89
  7.1 CONCLUSIONS ..................................................................................................................................89
    7.1.1 Design of a Measurement Tool ..................................................................................................89
    7.1.2 Status of eParticipation in Dutch Municipalities ....................................................................90
    7.1.3 Implications for eParticipation as a Concept .........................................................................92
    7.1.4 Impact on eParticipation Research .........................................................................................93
  7.2 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH ................................................................................................93
    7.2.1 Limitations in the Research Scope ............................................................................................94
    7.2.2 Limitations within the Measurement Tool ...............................................................................94
  7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THIS RESEARCH .................................................................95
    7.3.1 Recommendations for an Improved Measurement Tool .........................................................95
    7.3.2 Recommendations for New Research .....................................................................................96

REFLECTION ON THE GRADUATION PROJECT ...........................................................................97

REFERENCES ..........................................................................................................................................99

APPENDIX A – SCIENTIFIC ARTICLE .................................................................................................103

APPENDIX B – DESCRIPTION OF THE EPARTICIPATION MEASUREMENT TOOL .....................116
  ICT DATA ........................................................................................................................................116
  ICT SCORING ..................................................................................................................................129
  ICT PARTICIPATION LADDER ..........................................................................................................132
  ACTOR ANALYSIS ..........................................................................................................................137
  MUNICIPAL ORGANIZATION ...........................................................................................................141

APPENDIX C – INTERVIEW NOTES .....................................................................................................145
  EXPERT INTERVIEWS ........................................................................................................................145
  CASE STUDY INTERVIEWS ..............................................................................................................148
    Gemeente Dordrecht ......................................................................................................................148
    Gemeente Eindhoven .......................................................................................................................150
    Gemeente Breda ...............................................................................................................................151
    Gemeente Almere (Buitem) .............................................................................................................153
    Gemeente Amersfoort .....................................................................................................................155
    Gemeente Reeuwijk ...........................................................................................................................158
List of Figures

Figure 1 – Positioning of Definitions ..................................................... 18
Figure 2 – Desire to Participate and Channel Preference (Burger@Overheid.nl, 2007) ..................................................... 20
Figure 3 – Role of Government and Support (Burger@Overheid.nl, 2007) ..................................................... 20
Figure 4 – Participation preference for government levels (Burger@Overheid.nl, 2007) ..................................................... 21
Figure 5 – Municipal Objectives in eParticipation ..................................................... 23
Figure 6 – Demarcation within the municipal organization ..................................................... 26
Figure 7 – Overview Research Questions ..................................................... 28
Figure 8 – Herder’s Design Cycle (Herder, 1999) ..................................................... 29
Figure 9 – Research methods for each sub-question ..................................................... 30
Figure 10 – Map of Municipal Cases ..................................................... 32
Figure 11 – The five stages of UN eGovernment readiness (United Nations, 2008) ..................................................... 34
Figure 12 – eInformation indicators (United Nations, 2008) ..................................................... 34
Figure 13 – eConsultation indicators (United Nations, 2008) ..................................................... 34
Figure 14 – eDecision-making indicators (United Nations, 2008) ..................................................... 35
Figure 15 – Overheid.nl Monitor Municipal Ranking ..................................................... 36
Figure 16 – Positioning of evaluation factors (Loukis, et al., 2008) ..................................................... 38
Figure 17 – Lack of feedback for the public (Burger@Overheid.nl, 2007) ..................................................... 40
Figure 18 – Conceptual System Model ..................................................... 43
Figure 19 – Example indicators for Twitter ..................................................... 45
Figure 20 – The participation ladder (Post-Dijkstra, et al., 2009) ..................................................... 46
Figure 21 – Forrester Social Technographics (Li, et al., 2008) ..................................................... 48
Figure 22 – Technographics scores for the Netherlands ..................................................... 49
Figure 23 – List of common activities on eParticipatory websites (Burger@Overheid.nl, 2007) ..................................................... 50
Figure 24 – New and traditional roles of users (Frissen, 2008) ..................................................... 50
Figure 25 – The 5 stages of the policy cycle ..................................................... 52
Figure 26 – Map of tested municipalities ..................................................... 55
Figure 27 – Example of a poll (Reeuwijk) ..................................................... 60
Figure 28 – Example of a personal Blog (Mayor Job Cohen; Amsterdam) ..................................................... 61
Figure 29 – Example of a forum (Renswoude) ..................................................... 62
Figure 30 – Examples of Webcasts (Amsterdam & Almere) ..................................................... 62
Figure 31 – Example of municipal Hyves (Almere) ..................................................... 63
Figure 32 – Example of municipal Twitter (Utrecht) ..................................................... 63
Figure 33 – Examples of Flickr (left)(Breda) and Youtube (right)(Zoetermeer) ..................................................... 64
Figure 34 – Example of a Chat service (Houten) ..................................................... 64
Figure 35 – Example of an interactive map (verbeterdebuurt.nl) ..................................................... 65
Figure 36 – Example of an educative game (Zoetermeer) ..................................................... 66
Figure 37 – Examples of ePetitions (Groningen) ..................................................... 66
Figure 38 – Example of a virtual world (Tilburg) ..................................................... 67
Figure 39 – Example of a participatory budget (Groningen) ..................................................... 68
Figure 40 – Example of a chatbot (Almere) ..................................................... 69
Figure 41 – Example of a group support system ..................................................... 69
Figure 42 – The number of municipalities with each media form ..................................................... 70
Figure 43 – Total ICT Scores per Municipality ..................................................... 71
Figure 44 – The ICT Scores compared to the number of residents ..................................................... 72
Figure 45 – ICT Scores per Media Type ..................................................... 73
Figure 46 – ICT Support Scores ..................................................... 73
Figure 47 – Individual Scores Standard Media Forms ................................................................. 74
Figure 48 – Individual Scores Innovative Media Forms ............................................................ 74
Figure 49 – Individual Scores Experimental Media Forms ....................................................... 75
Figure 50 – Spider graph of selected participation ladder scores ........................................... 75
Figure 51 – Bar graph of selected participation ladder scores ............................................... 76
Figure 52 – Spider graph of selection technographic role scores ............................................ 77
Figure 53 – Spider graph of selected social technographic scores ......................................... 78
Figure 54 – Bar graph of selected social technographic scores .............................................. 79
Figure 55 – List of common activities on eParticipatory websites (Burger@Overheid.nl, 2007) ... 79
Figure 56 – Spider graph of selected policy cycle scores ....................................................... 80
Figure 57 – Example of personalized newsletter (Amsterdam) .............................................. 117
Figure 58 – Example of an SMS service (Amersfoort) ............................................................. 117
Figure 59 – Example of a poll (Reeuwijk) ................................................................................. 118
Figure 60 – Example of a personal Blog (Job Cohen; Amsterdam) .......................................... 120
Figure 61 – Example of a forum (Renswoude) ......................................................................... 120
Figure 62 – Examples of Webcasts (Amsterdam & Almere) .................................................... 121
Figure 63 – Example of municipal Facebook (Den Haag) ....................................................... 121
Figure 64 – Example of municipal Hyves (Almere) ................................................................. 122
Figure 65 – Example of municipal Twitter (Utrecht) ............................................................... 122
Figure 66 – Examples of Flickr (left)(Breda) and Youtube (right)(Zoetermeer) ...................... 123
Figure 67 – Example of a Chat service (Houten) ..................................................................... 123
Figure 68 – Example of an interactive map (verbeterdebuurt.nl) .......................................... 124
Figure 69 – Example of an educative game (Zoetermeer) ....................................................... 125
Figure 70 – Examples of ePetitions (Groningen) .................................................................... 125
Figure 71 – Example of a virtual world (Tilburg) ................................................................... 126
Figure 72 – Example of a participatory budget (Groningen) ................................................. 127
Figure 73 – Example of a chatbot (Almere) ............................................................................. 127
Figure 74 – Example of a chatbot (www.bol.com) ................................................................. 128
Figure 75 – Example of a group support system .................................................................... 128
Figure 76 – Spider graph of all participation ladder scores .................................................... 135
Figure 77 – Bar graph of all participation ladder scores ......................................................... 136
Figure 78 – Spider graph of all technographic role scores ...................................................... 139
Figure 79 – Bar graph of all technographic role scores ........................................................... 140
Figure 80 – Spider graph of all policy cycle scores ................................................................. 143
Figure 81 – Bar graph of all policy cycle scores .................................................................... 144
List of Tables
Table 1 – Technographics data per category in percentages.......................................................... 49
Table 2 – Standard media forms with indicators ......................................................................... 116
Table 3 – Innovative media forms with indicators ..................................................................... 118
Table 4 – Experimental media forms with indicators ................................................................. 124
Table 5 – ICT Support with indicators ......................................................................................... 128
Table 6 – Indicator Weights and Points......................................................................................... 129
Table 7 – Scoring per Media indicator ......................................................................................... 132
Table 8 – Matrix of Weights relating Media to the Participation ladder ..................................... 133
Table 9 – Full set of scores on the participation ladder ................................................................. 134
Table 10 – Weight matrix for media forms per role ................................................................. 137
Table 11 – Full set of scores on the social technographic roles ................................................. 138
Table 12 – Example of demographic data per municipality ....................................................... 141
Table 13 – Weight matrix relating the participation ladder to the policy cycle ....................... 142
Table 14 – Full set of scores on the policy cycle ...................................................................... 142
1 Introduction

An important element in serving the citizens of any democratic nation is to understand their needs and perceptions about the issues they find important; yet many citizens lack an interest and feel dissatisfied with politics (European Commission, 2007; Stegeman, 2008). Voter turnout and civic participation have been steadily decreasing since the 1960's (Niemi, et al., 2001) as “the vast majority has opted for passive exit from the political process” (Fraser, et al., 2008). Traditional channels like the newspaper and town hall meetings are decreasing in popularity among citizens, especially younger ones. The utilization of Internet and Communication Technologies (ICT), in the form of eGovernment, has the potential to remedy this situation by providing a complementary alternative to current offline systems and methods (Committee of Ministers, 2009; European Commission, 2007; Evans, et al., 2006; Ferguson, 2006).

eGovernment transfers offline channels and activities to an online environment with the goal of providing a more easily accessible substitute for citizens to access their government (Cap Gemini, 2007). An example of this is filling out an electronic form for a permit via the internet versus making an appointment at the municipal bureau during office hours and spending a longer amount of time waiting and being processed through the organizational system. Since eGovernment is a relatively new development, government entities (such as ministries, provinces, and municipalities) are still learning about how to offer the right online services and channels to their citizens. Most government organizations usually have websites where information, communication tools, and transaction services are present but often in only a very basic manner. These types of services represent different forms of eGovernment through which a citizen can come in contact with a government organization.

The concept of eParticipation is one branch of eGovernment and is focused specifically on the participation of citizens in the policy-forming processes of the government. Participation can involve all phases of the policy cycle: from agenda setting and problem formulation to decision-making and evaluation. The topics involved can also be very broad in nature, ranging from new spatial planning projects to cultural activities. Often the first point of contact for citizens is the municipality. This is an important level of government for eParticipation as citizens feel they are more personally involved and have a greater expectation about the effect of their participation in their municipality (Albrecht, 2008; Burger@Overheid.nl, 2007; European Commission, 2007).

There are two main reasons why eParticipation is being employed by the government to complement current offline participation methods. The first reason is to use ICT to support the current interactive policy-formation methods which exist in order to improve the quality of the process, but also to increase the representativity and the input from citizens (Central Office of Information, 2009). This represents a supply-side innovation to solve the perceived problem of the gap between citizens and their government. The use of eParticipation is the newest attempt to bridge this gap. An example of this is the use of a website polling process where residents are invited to vote on several alternatives outside of the discussions during town hall meetings. Relatively fewer people can or want to be present during such a meeting, but in their own time they can read about the issues on the website and cast their vote. Another example is a forum where citizens can post their issues or ideas in a thread which can be discussed by other citizens and officials.

The second reason underlying this is based on a growing hype occurring within society in the form of social media. Blogs, forums, and social networking websites are among the most popular forms of media in use on the internet today (Li, et al., 2008). This brings with it a changed perception and expectation
about media use, websites, and design. This is being picked up by private organizations trying to integrate themselves in the social networks of their customers but also by politicians hoping to reach more voters and campaign donators through new channels (Li, et al., 2008). The same aspect is applicable to governmental institutions trying to connect to a younger generation of citizens, but also conforming to the expectations of the modern citizen in general. These different media forms represent changes in the use of the municipal website as a source of information and communication with the municipal organization. Thus the use of eParticipation has an innovation aspect outside of the goal of improving policy formation.

This is not to say that there are no dangers or downsides present; the European Commission explicitly states in a progress report that with the use of eParticipation there is still doubt about its effectiveness and a danger of populist participation, without always ensuring mature and well-informed debate (European Commission, 2007). There is still a great uncertainty about the particular role that eParticipation should play and how open the participation process should be. An open process with a wider representativity can be good for achieving a broadly accepted solution, but this also brings with it process design requirements and facilitation skills for project leaders and government officials. There are many different media forms available for use to interact with citizens, but these are not all equally viable and can be put to different uses. Municipalities must first choose which ones work for their organization and constituents, but must also then avoid the negative aspects inherent in using eParticipation methods. These aspects can include shallow discussions and inappropriate online behavior, all of which require significant and skilled moderation by the municipality. On top of this, the municipality must also make sure to integrate this input in their own processes and provide transparent feedback.

The dissatisfaction that citizens feel with regard to the government can be engaged by employing new methods, but to what extent can this be resolved? The concept of the gap ("kloof") has been around in different forms for many decades now and has been a constant subject of attention for politicians (Andeweg, et al., 2006). The acceptance of a gap and the need for a democratic restructuring is the basis for the use of eParticipation. There is a danger in making use of eParticipation as a technology push if there is no concrete problem to be solved. Most citizens do not have the interest to actively participate, except in those cases where the issues will affect them personally. They cannot be forced to participate either, so how will this affect the investments that government organizations should make in eParticipation?

The use of eParticipation, and citizen participation in general, is also based on the assumption that interactive participation of citizens in the processes and projects of the government provides added value to the quality and support of the project. This is a much disputed issue where the ideal theory of interactive policy-formation is undermined with a large set of hazards including (but not limited to): misuse of the process by the government, lack of neutrality by process managers, misuse in selecting participants, and the fact that the government will always have more power than its citizens (Arend, 2007). The use of interactive policy-formation is more like another tool in the arena of process management than it is a goal in and of itself for the improvement of democracy; it all depends on how government officials, process managers, and other stakeholders (like citizens) make use of it (Arend, 2007). The abovementioned issues represent several underlying issues which currently exist in this field. These topics will be discussed further in the problem context section.

1.1 Research Objective

As seen above, there are clearly some potential advantages and dangers involved in the field of eParticipation with no clear picture of the end result. There are a great number of experiments occurring around the world (but especially in Europe) in the field of eParticipation, but there is currently little data
which connects all these efforts together (European Commission, 2007). Different technologies and manners of implementation grant various possibilities without knowing exactly what is sustainable and effective. These projects will either succeed or fail; what is important is that the lessons learned are shared throughout the field. In order to gain knowledge on this aspect it is necessary to form a comprehensive view of the activities and strategies being attempted. Such empirical data is a first step in discovering more about what is effective and what is not, but also about what the role of the government and citizens should be within eParticipation.

The problem is that the current benchmarks which measure the state and readiness of national eGovernment systems in order to provide feedback for improvement and new policy are either not being used for eParticipatory aspects or provide only a limited exploration of the possibilities. These measurements are also done on a national or ministerial level of government, while (as mentioned above) the municipality often forms the first stop for citizens. So if empirical data needs to be generated, it should be done on a municipal level first. The knowledge gained can improve municipal offerings and create best practices for other institutions and levels of government. This can also help municipalities to transition from an experimental mode into a more targeted use of eParticipation, as more knowledge is gained about what is occurring in the field.

From an actor-perspective the municipal manager is the focus. In the implementation and use of eParticipation methods, managers in the Communication department and other related sections must decide on a strategy and govern the process. They are also responsible for disseminating the information and input from citizens to the appropriate person, and are involved in deciding upon new investments. With the lack of aggregated information and knowledge about all the developments occurring in the field of eParticipation, these managers are dependent on their own projects and experiments to learn more about using eParticipation. They can benefit greatly from seeing what other municipalities are doing and measuring the level of their own efforts.

This presents an opportunity for creating a new measurement tool for the state of eParticipation which will offer empirical data about the range of experiments being done and the level at which municipalities are operating with regard to eParticipation. Knowing what the state of eParticipation is can provide not only a means to help municipalities improve their own processes and services for their interaction with citizens (Leenaerts, 2009; Grant, et al., 2005), but also provides the central government with an overview of the range and level of current experiments and projects. This in turn can affect the policies on eGovernment and eParticipation, but also the type of support that they give to municipalities in the form of subsidies and other projects. One example of this is the recent project in the Netherlands called the “Groene Golf Brigade” which provides support to participating municipalities (in the form of advice and training by consultants hired by the Ministry of Interior Affairs) within the concept Government 2.0 which includes eParticipation1.

The goal of this explorative research project is to create and evaluate a new measurement tool for the purpose of ascertaining the state of eParticipation in Dutch municipalities. The main research question is thus as follows:

**How can the current state of eParticipation within Dutch municipalities be measured?**

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Since an effective measurement tool has yet to be created, the focus will be on designing this tool and implementing it within several case studies; this will provide some initial results and help to evaluate the measurement tool before future use in the field. In order to create such a measurement tool, research will first be done on previous efforts to create benchmarks and proposed frameworks for eGovernment and eParticipation. A more comprehensive tool will then be created which is focused solely on Dutch municipalities, and this tool will then be evaluated by experts and tested within several municipalities.

1.2 Thesis Structure

This research thesis identifies in detail all the steps and aspects relevant to the research project. These elements are further outlined below.

- **Section 2 – Research Problem**
  - This section identifies a more in depth definition for the concepts of eGovernment, eDemocracy and eParticipation, as well as the identified problem. This includes the context and relevance of the research from a social and academic perspective. This is followed by a demarcation of the problem area and a problem statement is given which identifies the current knowledge gaps. A research question is outlined which addresses these knowledge gaps, and a research methodology is proposed which will provide an answer to this research question.

- **Section 3 – Research Elements – What to Measure?**
  - This section describes the attributes (both positive and negative) of previous benchmarks and proposed frameworks for eParticipation. This is followed by an outline of various recommendations and issues put forward by researchers in measuring eParticipation. These aspects are then transformed into a set of design requirements.

- **Section 4 – Design of the Measurement Tool**
  - This section provides a high level description of the designed artefact, including the 3 major design components: the ICT facilitation of the website, the level of citizen inclusion, and the municipal organization.

- **Section 5 – Verification and Evaluation**
  - This section describes how the measurement tool was verified and evaluated by measuring 17 municipalities, and then evaluated by experts from different fields. The feedback from these interviews was used to build an iteration of the measurement tool. The final design and the outcomes were discussed with 6 municipalities in the form of case study interviews.

- **Section 6 – Measurement and Analysis of eParticipation**
  - This section focuses on the outcomes of the measurement tool itself in the form of the raw data and the municipal scores, but also on the outcomes of the interviews in the 6 case studies. These interviews present an organizational context to the technical results. Feedback on the measurement tool from the case studies is also discussed here.

- **Section 7 – Conclusions and Recommendations**
  - This section presents the main conclusions to the research question, but also outlines the limitations of the research and designed artefact. Based on these limitations, a set of recommendations and proposed changes are discussed for further research.

- **Appendices**
  - A scientific paper, a detailed description of the measurement tool, and the full set of interview notes can all be found in the appendices to this thesis report.
2 Research Problem

An introduction of the main concepts is given first to help create an understanding of the problem and the relevance of this research. Subsequently, the research problem and knowledge gap are defined, before presenting the research questions and methods.

2.1 Research Context

2.1.1 What is eParticipation?
Before delving into a detailed description of the problem it is important to begin with some definitions of important terms, as this research field has quite a few concepts which overlap in scope. Many researchers also have different definitions for the same terms, so it is useful to note some core definitions which can be adapted for this research. This process was useful during this research project to refine the perceptions about different elements and to narrow down the research environment, especially with regard to the choices made in the design of the measurement tool. This was a crucial element in the subsequent interviews as well, as the term eParticipation is sometimes not even used, instead the terms dialogue or cooperation is used with an implicit internet component. Knowing the underlying elements within eParticipation helps to create a shared understanding.

The concept of eGovernment contains the broadest of definitions, which also generally encompass other related fields. Here follow some definitions:

- “E-Government means the communication between the government and its citizens via computers and a Web-enabled presence” (Evans, et al., 2006).
- “The use of information and communication technologies, particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government” (OECD, 2003).
- “The use of information and communication technologies in all facets of the operations of a government organization” (Koh, et al., 2003).
- “Electronic information-based services for citizens (e-administration) with reinforcement of participatory elements (e-democracy) to achieve objectives of balanced e-government” (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2001).

From these definitions we can derive some important characteristics about eGovernment:

- Communication via computers and internet is central.
- The goal is better government.
- It is relevant in all governmental processes.
- It can be divided into eAdministration and eDemocracy.

Since eAdministration will not be handled in this research, the next important concept to define is eDemocracy.

- “Digitally conveyed information (transparency) and the political influence (participation) exerted by citizens and business on the opinion-forming processes of public – state and non-state – institutions” (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2001).
• “The use of information and communication technologies and strategies by democratic actors within political and governance processes of local communities, nations and on the international stage” (Clift, 2003).

• “eDemocracy is concerned with the use of information and communication technology to engage citizens, to support the democratic decision-making processes, and to strengthen representative democracy” (Macintosh, et al., 2006).

Again, some important characteristics are evident here:

• Information and political influence is transmitted to the government.
• The use of ICT within political and governance processes.
• Encouraging citizens to engage in these processes and improving democracy.

Within the definition of this concept, eDemocracy is situated more on the political and policy-oriented side of eGovernment. This includes elements like political elections, eVoting, and policy formation within government entities. As seen from these definitions, the concept of eParticipation becomes clearer in this context. This is the final concept to be defined on the basis of the previous two.

• “The participation of individuals and legal entities in political and administrative decision-making processes by means of information and communication technology” (Albrecht, 2008).

• “E-participation is the support and enhancement of democratic participation and encompasses those sectors of e-democracy where civil society and businesses are involved in drawing up formal and informal agendas and shaping and taking decisions” (European Commission, 2007).

• “The use of information and communication technologies to broaden and deepen political participation by enabling citizens to connect with one another and with their elected representatives” (Macintosh, 2006).

• eParticipation includes all the forms of active citizenship which utilize modern communication technology to influence public services, public management and social cohesion (Leenaerts, 2009).

From these examples, the close proximity of eParticipation and eDemocracy is unmistakable. The Committee of Ministers indicates that eParticipation is a smaller part within eDemocracy, while Macintosh and the International Center of Excellence for Local eDemocracy also continue on by identifying that eDemocracy addresses the electoral process on one hand, and citizen eParticipation on the other (ICELE, 2008; Macintosh, et al., 2006). In the context of this research, this distinction results in a more narrow definition of eParticipation. This definition excludes the concept of eVoting for the purpose of political elections. The focus is on the inclusion and involvement of citizens in policy formation and decision-making within the government (see figure below).
The resulting definition for the purposes of this research is the following:

\textit{eParticipation is the utilization of ICT by citizens to communicate with and influence the government in their policy-formation and decision-making processes.}

2.1.2 Objectives and Issues Underlying eParticipation

The concept of eParticipation was defined in detail in the previous section, but why does our society need to have eParticipation? There are significant changes occurring in the culture and technology of younger generations, resulting in a gap between citizens and their government. On the one hand political and administrative decision-makers are faced “with low election turn-outs, tight budgets, increasing integration, and decreasing relevance of physical boundaries”, while on the other hand there is “an ever increasing technology-savvy and demanding citizenry” (European Commission, 2007). Van Gunsteren and Andeweg concluded in 1994 that the gap consisted mostly of a new sensitivity of politicians reacting to a richer and better educated population of citizens, and that there was no real increase in the distance between citizens and politicians (Gunsteren, et al., 1994). The issue of the ‘gap’ has not disappeared since then. In new research by Andeweg and Thomassen in 2006 the conclusion has changed slightly; while the causes of the gap seem to change and remain vague, there does seem to be a structural problem present (Andeweg, et al., 2006). According to Dalton, this erosion of public confidence is due to a post-materialistic culture where the quality of life and self-discovery have become more important, while citizens are better educated and have access to more information (Dalton, 2004). Although the level of citizen trust is generally higher in the Netherlands, since 2002 this confidence has also started to decrease. In 2006, 66% of members of Parliament believed that a gap exists (Andeweg, et al., 2006).

eParticipation is the most recent step in empowering citizens to protect their rights and have their voices heard by the government (Evans, et al., 2006). There is a general belief that utilizing eParticipation will help to bridge this gap so that “decision makers serve citizens more effectively” (Evans, et al., 2006) and “build policy support to take effective action and avoid political and social divides” (European Commission, 2007). This belief is built on the premise that interactive policy-formation is effective in closing this gap and produces better and more supported decisions and plans (Arend, 2007; Central Office of Information, 2009). While this seems true in a theoretical sense, there are definite obstacles and problems with this in practice. The use of interactive policy-forming opens the process to citizens and gives them more power to contribute; this is an intrusion however in the role of the public official who generally becomes defensive (despite their acceptance of the presence of the ‘gap’ and its need to be reduced) (Arend, 2007). In order to adapt to this intrusion the role of the government would need to change toward a more facilitating role where process management skills help to accept and use the new
input from citizens (Bruijn, et al., 2003). Yet the danger exists that due to the difference in power between the government and individual citizens that strategic behavior will exist which makes misuse of interactive policy-formation: process managers can be partial, the choice of participants can be skewed, and outcomes may not translate into the final policy. The use of interactive policy-formation is more like another tool in the arena of process management than it is a goal in and of itself for the improvement of democracy; it all depends on how government officials, process managers, and other stakeholders (like citizens) make use of it (Arend, 2007). The fact that government entities are moving forward and experimenting with eParticipation indicates a motivation to improve the democratic process through increased citizen participation, although this does not guarantee success.

The objective to introduce and improve eParticipation is supported by the European Union’s (EU) i2010 initiative, which hopes to create “better decision-making processes and greater participation of citizens in all phases of the democratic decision-making process” (European Commission, 2007). Some of the relevant priorities of this initiative consist of full access and inclusion of citizens, high user satisfaction, and “employing effective tools for public debate and participation in democratic decision-making” (Cap Gemini, 2007). Using interactive policy-formation (including eParticipation) can help to ensure that policies and services are deemed relevant and successful by the people the government is meant to serve (Central Office of Information, 2009).

These are relatively new priorities as the focus in previous years has been on the spread of ICT infrastructure and broadband connections, providing information to citizens, and transferring offline services into online transaction services (requesting forms, filing taxes, car registration, etc.) in the form of eAdministration. Government entities are generally becoming accustomed to implementing and maintaining these aspects, but the deeper elements of eParticipation are still in their infancy (Albrecht, 2008; European Commission, 2007). Yet it is not sufficient to simply focus on administrative efficiency, as “being citizens of an information society means not only being able to access the services of a more efficient public administration…but also being offered a new way of taking part in public life” (EuroSpace, 2009). Another reason reflects the change in the more educated citizens of today who have access to a great amount of information, as mentioned before. The interactions between people and their sources of information are increasingly found through the internet. Citizens can participate more easily via the internet as it is independent of time and place, while also lowering barriers-to-entry because of its relative anonymity and lack of social pressure (EuroSpace, 2009). The growth of a social network-based internet is something that shouldn’t escape the attention of private companies or governments (Li, et al., 2008). The perception of an outdated website (as communication channel and information source) and limited functionality are obstacles in including this new generation of technology-savvy citizens.

2.1.3 Willingness to Participate and Where

Despite the societal disengagement from politics that is described in much of Europe (European Commission, 2007; Ferguson, 2006; Post-Dijkstra, et al., 2009), there is an intended desire in the Netherlands to think with the government about issues, especially via the internet (see Figure 2) (Burger@Overheid.nl, 2007). This data seems to contradict other research however, which says that the amount of active online participation is about as common as involvement in a political party, which is not very common at all (Albrecht, 2008). It is possible that there is a distinction between having a general desire to participate and following this up with actual active participation. One deterrent in this is a lack of facilitation by the government in providing sufficient information about current issues and giving feedback about their input (see Figure 3) (Albrecht, 2008; Burger@Overheid.nl, 2007). The 50% of “interested” respondents shown in Figure 2 below could be interpreted as that part of the gap which (e)participation could potentially have an impact on.
Previous research has shown that eParticipation is more desirable on a municipal level (see Figure 4), and as such can also have the greatest impact on government processes (Albrecht, 2008; Burger@Overheid.nl, 2007). This research has shown that citizens feel they are more personally involved and have a greater expectation about the effect of their participation in their municipality (European Commission, 2007). The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (among others), feel that more can be accomplished on this level to “counteract disillusionment with politics and to support more democratic commitment” (Committee of Ministers, 2009). If citizens have confidence that their voice will be heard, they will feel more “compelled to engage in civic activity” (Fraser, et al., 2008).
2.1.4 Why Measure eParticipation?

What then is the added value of measuring the state of eParticipation? In this field, measurements are often an attempt to quantify or operationalize a complex and “soft” system. Breaking down such a subject into smaller and measurable parts can provide greater insight into the system. Grant provides some benefits for measuring eGovernment and eParticipation (Grant, et al., 2005):

- the current situation can be compared with the desired situation which provides information on the developments still required
- it assists in analyzing the costs and benefits of the investments and resources which are committed
- it also provides “the energy for change that is a requirement for any transformation process” (Grant, et al., 2005 p. 10).

Other researchers (Bugter, et al., 2007) support these arguments: the effect of policy can be tested using benchmarks and the competitive nature surrounding benchmarks like Overheid.nl Monitor drive investments in eGovernment and eParticipation further.

The Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting of the United Nations (UN) (UN Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting, 2006) also gives three purposes for benchmarking in general:

- retrospective achievement – informing policy makers about their position in some field (such as eGovernment) relative to other countries or organizations.
- prospective direction/priorities – aiding in the identification of improvement points for policy makers and/or the creation of best practices.
- accountability – creating a set of criteria with which to measure the impact of investments, thereby holding governments and organizations accountable for their success or failure.

Due to the infancy of eParticipation (Committee of Ministers, 2009; Albrecht, 2008), the current focus of government entities is exploratory in nature. All of the different countries and governmental organizations who have invested in experiments represent a divergent set of methods and philosophies which try to find an answer to the issues named in section 2.1.2, yet “comparative empirical classifications and evaluations remain the exception” (Albrecht, 2008). In order to derive meaningful
conclusions and best practices for eParticipation, these divergent experiments need to be converged and evaluated. Due to the lack of a conclusive set of strategies in the field of eParticipation and a general answer to the question of which investments are effective or not, this research will concentrate on benchmarking and measuring municipal eParticipation so as to create a view of the empirical state of the art of eParticipation activities. The results of this measurement can then form the basis for deeper research into some of the issues underlying eParticipation and interactive policy-formation. By first converging the different experiments and projects in an analysis, a set of best practices can start to build and a better picture of other issues such as effectiveness and the different roles of citizen (e)participation can be formed.

This research also has a secondary goal which focuses on the practitioner’s point of view. The benchmarking motivations mentioned above are applicable to two main actors in the field: the central government and municipalities. The central government, mainly the Ministry of Interior Affairs, oversees the national policy for eParticipation. They also provide subsidies and support projects to municipalities and other institutions. They have an interest in overseeing the total set of experiments and projects which municipalities are making in this field; the amount of investment and effort needed depends on this in relation to meeting the objectives set by the national government specifically and the European Commission in general (European Commission, 2007).

Municipalities also have an interest in reflecting upon the state of eParticipation and their place in that state. Whether they have already made investments in this area or are still contemplating their own strategy, a benchmark on eParticipation provides the basis for an overview of all efforts being made. The goal of this tool is to give the municipality a better understanding of its own position in eParticipation. This will essentially define how active they are in facilitating eParticipation on their website and in what capacity this online activity is contributing to the work within the municipality. From such measurement a municipality can understand the context of its own policies, the current status of its accomplishments, and also develop a practical vision for the future. Instead of forging ahead with only a general sense of direction, municipalities can improve upon concrete aspects in their endeavor to improve their policies. These last aspects are not necessarily direct outcomes of the measurement tool but it does provide the data for such contemplation and strategizing. This reflection can range from an adjustment in governance processes within the municipal organization or the basis for new investments within the Communication department. A diagram is shown below in Figure 5 which outlines the objectives mentioned above for this central actor.
2.1.4.1 Criticism on Benchmarking

While the focus of this research is on creating a general measurement tool, one of its uses is as a benchmark. While the objectives of benchmarking appear to be useful for the field of eParticipation, there are several criticisms which should be mentioned in order that they may be taken into account in the design of a new measurement tool.

Benchmarks carry with them certain perceptions and connotations which affect their use within society. They are often a simplification of a complex situation (so that it can be modeled); and so their outcomes need to be interpreted correctly and objectively since there is a risk of politicization and misuse (Bannister, 2007). An example of this problem occurs currently with the Overheid.nl Monitor benchmark; the researchers screen only those elements which are visible on the website, while the back-office is forgotten despite its importance within the municipal processes (Bugter, et al., 2007).

The assessment of a situation must also be transformed into a score, but the method for this will vary and different weights will be given to certain things which not every researcher would agree upon. This
becomes especially problematic when soft concepts which are qualitative in nature must be measured with a numeric score (Bannister, 2007).

Another difficulty is the changes that occur in society and technology which may change the definitions of the concepts which are measured by the benchmark; scores become less relevant and comparable, and the indicators may need to change as well (Bannister, 2007).

The re-use of a benchmark can itself become a problem for objective measurement, as organizations will adapt to the system and will focus on scoring points in the benchmark (Bannister, 2007); this is an example of strategic behavior by actors which can skew the objectivity of the benchmark. As will be shown in the following section, this is another negative aspect of the Overheid.nl Monitor benchmark.

All these factors identify several pitfalls which one must try to avoid in creating a useful measurement tool.

### 2.2 Problem Relevance

In this section, two different types of relevancy will be described which this research supports.

#### 2.2.1 What is the Social Relevance?

From a social perspective, the tension lies between the steady innovation of ICT, the myriad of opportunities it can provide and the changing needs of citizens in the 21st century where concepts such as transparency and accountability clash with a growing disinterest and disassociation with the government (Ferguson, 2006).

Facilitating eParticipation through municipal and related websites provides a great opportunity for the internet generation to bypass traditional channels like town hall meetings and participate via channels and services that they are more familiar with (EuroSpace, 2009). The working population can participate more easily via the internet as it is independent of time and place, while also lowering barriers-to-entry because of its relative anonymity and lack of social pressure (EuroSpace, 2009). Yet on the other hand, the steadily increasing influence of ICT means that disadvantaged people (because of age, income or education for example) can fall by the wayside in terms of eParticipation (Archmann, et al., 2009; European Commission, 2007). Citizen participation is not only online however; so while accessibility is an important issue, the offline component will likely remain in some form.

Municipalities must find a balance within these two issues if they wish to facilitate the participation of a broad range of citizens. If municipalities are able to measure how many citizens they include and the demographics of their participants then they should be able to put the communications and feedback they receive via the website into context. They could also then design and adapt their media forms to reach new and different types of citizens.

#### 2.2.2 What is the Academic Relevance?

The focus in eParticipation (and other related fields) is shifting from a technological orientation to examining the "role of the Internet in the context of social and cultural change" (Albrecht, 2008). The interplay between technology, policy analysis, and political processes makes this an especially interesting concept to study. The common view among many government entities is that providing the technological
opportunity to interact via a website constitute the finishing line in eParticipation, yet “simply building a website does not equate to online engagement” (Ferguson, 2006). Not only site administration and moderation are needed, but also including civil officials and experts for a meaningful interaction or discussion is necessary in order to utilize citizens’ perceptions and knowledge throughout the government.

Creating a measurement tool for such an aspect puts the technological media forms in perspective with regard to its effect on the workings and attitude of the government. The subject raises a few interesting questions, such as: What types of participation are addressed by the municipality? What types of citizens are included? How are ideas and complaints from citizens processed in terms of problem formulation or self-evaluation? How does the municipality internalize and use the external knowledge of its citizens when formulating policy or making decisions on local issues?

This research addresses the interaction between technology, citizens, and government through the creation of a measurement tool which addresses these different aspects. The output of such a tool can be used to measure the current status of a municipality’s eParticipation level and compare it with other municipalities. Both the data from the website itself and the analysis of patterns for all municipalities can be used to gain insight and help to stimulate the improvement of their efforts at eParticipation with their citizens.

2.3 Problem Definition

This section will start with a demarcation of the problem area and will conclude with a description of the knowledge gaps and a problem definition, as concluded from the problem description from the previous sections.

2.3.1 Demarcation of the Research Environment

Some adaptations on the focus of this research have already been made in previous sections with regards to the type of government entities involved and the definition of eParticipation which is used; this section provides a complementary overview of all relevant demarcations.

The research covers only municipalities in the Netherlands. While international cases and studies are examined through desk research, any and all findings are transferred into a Dutch context (to the extent possible). As mentioned previously, citizens feel more involved on this level and so eParticipation can find a high impact area in which to evolve. Many of the previous benchmarks and frameworks on eGovernment and eParticipation focus on either the country as a whole or on ministries, but not often on a municipal level; this provides an opportunity to focus on the many local developments which are taking place and the unique characteristics of local government.

The demarcation on municipalities can be specified further by defining which organizational parts will be included. The main entities within a municipality are the city council (democratically elected politicians belonging to different parties), the college of aldermen (the mayor and his deputy mayors chosen by the Monarchy and the city council respectively), and the administrative (“ambtelijk”) division of the municipality. As such, only the municipal websites are evaluated, not the individual political party websites. This demarcation is important because of the difference in the roles that each entity plays in municipal processes and the policy cycle, but also because of the potential tensions which can occur between these different actors (political officials versus civil officials). These aspects are investigated during the case studies.
A second demarcation aspect involves the focus of the measurement tool itself. Other benchmarks have focused on the sophistication and availability of website technology for example (Burgerlink, 2008); what is essential here is the ability of ICT to facilitate and enable eParticipation. This is the main parameter on which the technology aspects of this research will be measured. Testing the effectiveness of media forms and eParticipation will not be included in this research. This is sufficiently complex enough to necessitate an entirely separate research project. This also seems premature at this time due to the infancy of the eParticipation field. The measurements focus on the activity and character (one-way, two-way interaction, etc.) of the media forms used on the municipal website (and on some external websites). This is done with some assumption that the use of interactive policy-formation is relevant and that a gap exists between citizens and the government. These aspects come up within the case studies but will not be the main element of study.

The concept of eParticipation can include citizens, businesses/organizations, and other government entities. In this research however, the focus is centered on interaction between government and citizens (G2C) only. Usually businesses are more able to stay in contact with the government, either through public-private partnerships or lobbies for example; this is more difficult for citizens. The citizen as a constituent of the municipality has a more prominent role in an eParticipation context.

The last demarcation aspect involves the types of online media forms which are relevant for this research. Since the main focus of eParticipation is the inclusion of citizens in the political and decision-making processes of the government, the concept of the citizen as a customer is not appropriate. This means that transaction services in the form of eAdministration (requesting forms, filing taxes, car registration, etc.) are be included in the measurement tool. Also, while eVoting is not included, the concept of polling as an online media form is still included as it is not connected to the electoral process. No offline activities are included with regards to participation. The focus will remain on the online element, if there is a combination of both online and offline media forms/activities.

2.3.2 Knowledge Gaps and Problem Statement
The growth in the popularity of eParticipation has also been followed up by an increase in the research of eParticipation, especially with an interest in measuring and benchmarking. Within the government the focus currently has been on providing information, building an online service portfolio, and building up the technology to support eGovernment and eParticipation. Many of the current measurement tools
especially Overheid.nl Monitor, the main tool in use in the Netherlands) have a technological focus and use relatively shallow measurement instruments to indicate levels of eParticipation. Some attention has been given in academic research to measuring the extent of actor participation in terms of demographics (Macintosh, 2006) but this has not been incorporated into a measurement tool as such. The same holds for measuring the effect of the eParticipation which is facilitated on a municipal website on the actual decision-making processes within the municipality. From this summation of incomplete and missing pieces (an aspect which will be discussed in more detail in section 3.1), this researcher concludes that a new measurement tool is needed in order to define a more accurate state of eParticipation within municipalities.

This can be expressed in the following problem definition:

As the field of eParticipation is in the experimentation phase with a wide range of experiments and projects occurring, these efforts need to be converged and analyzed in order to provide a more complete evaluation of the current status of eParticipation within municipalities. Specifically, an overview is needed of the direction municipal eParticipation investments are heading with regard to the types of media being used and how these are being used to interact with citizens. Such analysis can bring much needed insight and understanding about eParticipation for municipalities.

2.4 Research Question

As mentioned before, the goal of the research project is the creation of a newly designed measurement tool for the purpose of ascertaining the state of eParticipation in Dutch municipalities. Since an effective measurement tool has yet to be created, the focus is on the design this tool and implementation within several case studies; this provides some initial results and helps to evaluate the measurement tool before future use in the field.

To address the problem statement of the previous section and the above-mentioned research objective, the following research question is proposed:

How can the current state of eParticipation within Dutch municipalities be measured?

To assist in answering the main research question, the following sub-questions and design objectives are formulated:

1. Which eParticipation factors are useful to include in the design of a measurement tool?
   a. What are the positive and negative aspects of previous measurement tools and proposed frameworks?
   b. What other elements can be considered relevant in measuring eParticipation?

2. Formulate a set of design requirements for a new measurement tool.

3. What are the specifications of the measurement tool that fulfill the following design objectives:
   a. Create a measurement tool component which determines how much eParticipation is facilitated through the media forms used on a municipal website.
      i. Which media forms should be included in the list?
      ii. How should these elements be categorized according to the role they fulfill?
iii. How can these media forms be measured to determine the state of eParticipation which they enable?
iv. How can these measurements be modeled visually?
b. Create a measurement tool component which determines the inclusion of local citizens on the municipal website.
   i. Which characteristics define the reach of a municipal website?
   ii. What types of citizens can be defined and what are their specific attributes?
   iii. Which media forms can be linked to particular groups of citizens?
   iv. How can these measurements be modeled visually?
c. Create a measurement tool component which determines the level of inclusion of the eParticipation media forms within the organization of the municipality.
   i. Which processes within municipalities are relevant for eParticipation?
   ii. What characteristics of a municipality determine the level of inclusion?
   iii. Which actors are connected to these processes and what are their roles with regard to eParticipation?
   iv. How can these characteristics and processes be linked to the eParticipation?
v. How can these measurements be modeled visually?

4. How can the measurement tool be tested and evaluated?
   a. What research method elements should be utilized to fulfill this requirement?
   b. Which experts should be interviewed to provide different perspectives on the model?
   c. Which municipalities should be studied in order to provide a useful set of cases?

5. What do the initial results of the measurement tool indicate about the state of eParticipation in Dutch municipalities?
   a. What do the data and the scores of the measurement tool indicate?
   b. What results do the case study interviews provide as a complement to the measurement tool findings?

6. What aspects of the measurement tool can be improved upon in the future, based on the case study findings?

An overview is given in the figure below of the research questions and steps categorized by question number.

![Figure 7 – Overview Research Questions](image-url)
2.5 Research Methodology

This research project utilizes Herder’s Design Cycle as an overall research methodology, with several other individual methods which have been chosen for the collection and analysis of data. The theoretical concepts of these methods will be discussed in this section.

2.5.1 Herder’s Design Cycle

The following steps describe the theory of Herder’s design cycle (see Figure 8) and how it will be applied within this research (Herder, 1999):

1. **Develop Goals** – The goals of this design have already been defined in the introduction and problem statement.

2. **Develop Design Space** – The design space is a set of alternatives and design variables which the final design could include. These aspects are analyzed in the following section while evaluating previous benchmarks and measurement tools.

3. **Formulate Objectives and Constraints** – The constraints of this design have already been created in the demarcation section. The full set of design requirements include the objectives are defined on the basis of desk research and the evaluation of previous benchmarks and measurement tools. From the previous step, the structure of the design is outlined into a set of specifications. The final specifications can be found in section 4 and Appendix B – Description of the eParticipation Measurement Tool.

4. **Develop Tests** – The specifications are then built into a first model of the design. The test for the design involves holding interviews with various experts both within Berenschot and externally. Discussions were held on the positive and negative aspects of the model with the output of a list of possible improvements. Testing has also been done within the Excel model the design was built in using 17 different municipalities as test cases. These verification and evaluation aspects are discussed.

![Figure 8 – Herder’s Design Cycle (Herder, 1999)](image-url)
further in section 5. The issues found in the design of this measurement tool can be found in Appendix B – Description of the eParticipation Measurement Tool.

5. Selection – The last step is the creation of a final design. The design measurement tool was used in 6 case studies in order to evaluate the usefulness of the model. This also provides the basis for the data on the state of eParticipation in Dutch municipalities.

An overview is given below in Figure 9 of the research steps in relation to the sub-questions. The first hunch and the assumptions are not included here as these have already been defined in a previous section.

The research is focused on building design requirements and specifications based on a literature review and desk research on the subject of eParticipation; a prototype was discussed and evaluated by internal experts at Berenschot, external experts in the field, and a selection of municipal case studies. Through interviews with these different actors the reliability of the research is improved, in order to avoid “extreme inductivism” (Goldthorpe, 2000) and is tempered by multiple perspectives and expert opinions. The measurement tool was improved iteratively, as each new input added value and insight.

2.5.2 Desk Research
Desk research involves gathering data from many different sources in order to provide a good background for further research; in this case such sources include academic journals and publications, internal publications from Berenschot, online publications, and websites. This method supports the definition of the design space and requirements, and subsequently the design specifications and selection as described in Herder’s Design Cycle.

2.5.3 Interviews
Since eParticipation is a growing field, interviews can be useful to gain insight from experts who have had some experience in this field. Interviews are important during the testing/evaluation (4) and measure/analyze (5) phase, as seen in Figure 9 above.

During the fourth phase, the interviews consist of semi-structured interviews with a more unstructured tone. The purpose is to focus on analyzing and critiquing the measurement tool, yet it is important during this phase to allow the interviewees to express their open opinions and perceptions about eParticipation and its measurement. The first step in this process was to interview people within Berenschot in order to get a first round of feedback and advice on how to proceed; the interviewed experts included individuals.
from the departments of Information Management, Communications, and Research to gain a broad set of perspectives. They also provided connections to other experts and potential case study candidates. The second step was to speak to external experts in the government (the Ministry of Interior Affairs and Burgerlink), in the field of social media (the Crowds), and citizen participation (OnzeWijk). The interview protocol was kept relatively straight-forward and open. Each interview began with an unstructured discussion about their perception of eParticipation and the various aspects and issues involved, and then each interviewee was led through each section of the measurement tool with specific questions about usability, clarity, and other relevant aspects.

During the fifth phase there is a structured interview element, where the measurement tool is applied to the municipality and reflected upon, and then a semi-structured part where the interviewees are asked open questions about their own experiences and also to reflect on the measurement tool and the assessment. The interview notes can be found in Appendix C – Interview Notes.

### 2.5.4 Case Studies

A case study is essentially a real-world example in which to test or explore a theory, or as Yin puts it: “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 1984). With a single or multiple set of cases, a researcher attempts to explore the practical application or effects of a researched theory in a setting where the full complexity of real-life can reflect upon the robustness or validity of the theory. There are several major steps involved with case studies, namely: determining the research questions, selecting cases and data gathering/analysis techniques, collecting data, and evaluation/analysis. The selection of cases is a crucial element as this can determine the abundance of data and the range of empirical observations possible. Cases can be chosen which represent the norm, but also unique cases which may test the extreme ranges of the theory; choosing different types of cases can help to improve the validity of the research (Soy, 1997). Criticisms of this method should also be mentioned (Soy, 1997):

- Studying a small number of cases cannot be used as a basis for generating a consistent or reliable theory.
- Intense exposure to the cases can bias the analysis.

What this means is that the results of the case studies used in this research can provide an initial set of outcomes and conclusions with regard to the state of eParticipation, but these results are by no means conclusive for all municipalities.

The case study aspect of the proposed research becomes relevant with the selection of municipalities in which to test the measurement tool. The objective is two-fold: to find weak points in the measurement tool for subsequent improvement and to perform an actual evaluation of the state of eParticipation within a municipality. These case studies will help to answer the main research question, while also contributing to the evaluation of the research. The following municipal cases have been chosen: Dordrecht, Eindhoven, Breda, Almere, Amersfoort, and Reeuwijk.
These municipalities have been chosen for several reasons:

- The total set of useful municipalities is limited due to the early stage that eParticipation is still in. There are relatively few municipalities who have made significant investments in their website. This is also reflected in the choices for measurement tool test subjects (section 5.1.2). The strategy for this set of case studies is therefore focused on deviant cases in order to produce more substantial and interesting results (Yin, 1984).

- Five large municipalities have been chosen which are relatively active in eParticipation. These municipalities are more likely to produce interviews in which a deep and substantial discussion on the topic of eParticipation can be held, simply because they have already had prior experience with it.

- A small municipality (Reeuwijk) is used as contrast to these larger municipalities. They make use of several media forms on their website to encourage eParticipation but are generally still in the stage of defining for themselves what eParticipation is and what their own strategy should be. This is the only small municipality in the case studies, but the outcomes are supported in part by the use of a few other small municipalities in testing the measurement tool itself.

- These municipalities have also been chosen for their broad range within several characteristics:
  - Different levels of scores in the measurement tool (Almere with the top score, several with high to medium scores, and Reeuwijk with the lowest score).
  - Different cultures with regard to citizen participation (Dordrecht talks about a specific “Dordtse Aanpak” strategy, while Amersfoort for example, has a different but active mostly-offline participation approach).
  - The level on which participation is focused is also different (from project-based to district-based to a general municipal level).
  - Different levels of activity and support from the mayor, aldermen, and the city council (such as having a personal blog on the website for example).

Berenschot was of great assistance in helping to find the right contacts within different municipalities. These contacts were essential in finding the right officials to interview within the municipality.
3 eParticipation Elements – What to Measure?

The objective of this section is to explore the literature, benchmarks, and measurement tools that already exist in the field of eGovernment and eParticipation. This represents step 2 and the basis for step 3 of Herder’s Design Cycle. eGovernment is still mentioned here as older benchmarks sometimes contain participatory elements which are useful to analyze. As mentioned in section 2.4, the goal of this evaluation is to identify positive and negative elements from this previous work and to identify missing elements which previous benchmarks and measurement tools have not incorporated. The evaluation criteria is based on the level of focus on eParticipatory versus eAdministrative (service-oriented) elements, the range of eParticipation elements used (technology centered versus organizational aspects), the depth and type of indicators used, the usefulness of the elements for municipal measurement, and any other factors which are important to measure which are related to eParticipation. These last factors are based on the process of defining eParticipation, namely the need for information, the focus on governance processes and decision-making, engaging and enabling citizens to influence the government, improving democracy, and the use of ICT.

A selection of measurement frameworks are analyzed first and then some general advice, criticism, and potential framework elements are presented. At the end, all of these loose elements are converted into a set of design requirements.

3.1 eParticipation Measurement Tools and Benchmarks

In this section, a selection of eParticipation measurement tools and benchmarks are presented and discussed in light of their positive and negative aspects. For the sake of clarity it should be mentioned that in the benchmark descriptions below, the terminology used is that of the benchmarks themselves; often the concepts of maturity, readiness, and quality are used while meaning the same essential notion. This essential notion of eParticipation refers to the depth and complexity with which citizens are able to interact with their government. In the new design this will simply be referred to as the state of eParticipation.

3.1.1 UN eGovernment Survey

The United Nations (UN) has conducted an eGovernment survey since 2002, the latest being from 2008 (United Nations, 2008). The main focus of the benchmark is on eGovernment readiness with some attention given to eParticipation. The 2008 survey measured 189 Member States with a binary value for each indicator depending on the presence (or lack thereof) of certain functions. Only the national portals or official government homepages were measured, along with 5 pre-determined ministries (United Nations, 2008). For each country the ministries of Health, Education, Social Welfare, Labor, and Finance were assessed on the quality of their transaction services (requesting forms, filing taxes, car registration, etc.). The benchmark identifies five stages of eGovernment readiness, seen in the figure below.
eParticipation is handled in a separate section for the same set of Member States. Only national portals and selected ministries are measured. Three levels are identified in this benchmark:

- **eInformation** (providing basic information)
- **eConsultation** (asking for opinions and feedback)
- **eDecision-making** (actively seeking input and a commitment to include this in decision-making)

The specific indicators used to identify scores are shown in the figures below.

**Figure 11 – The five stages of UN eGovernment readiness (United Nations, 2008)**

**Figure 12 – eInformation indicators (United Nations, 2008)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Number of Countries</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government provides a clear and explicit written e-participation policy or mission</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail alerts for e-participation purposes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSS used to update and involve citizens</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written calendar listing of upcoming online participation activities</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 13 – eConsultation indicators (United Nations, 2008)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Number of Countries</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of polls to solicit citizen opinion</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of chat (instant messaging) to solicit citizen opinion</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of weblogs (blogs) to solicit citizen opinion</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An open web forum for discussing any topic</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An open online discussion forum specifically for policy issues</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of past discussions in an online forum is posted</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal online consultation process offering a structured way for citizens to comment on government laws or policy</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-formal online consultation mechanism asking for citizen feedback on policies and activities</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 14 – eDecision-making indicators (United Nations, 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government commits itself, formally or informally, to incorporating the results of e-participation into e-decision-making</th>
<th>Number of Countries</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicit acknowledgement of received e-opinions, e-deliberations and e-interactions</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government sends a 'sent receipt' to citizens after receiving input, including a copy of what was received, by whom, time/date received and estimated response time</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officials moderate e-deliberations online</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government publishes findings/results of citizen opinions, including e-opinions, on website</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most important conclusions which can be made about this benchmark can be outlined as follows:

1. It uses the standard levels of eParticipation (eInformation, eConsultation, eDecision-making). While many researchers find this sufficient, others have identified a broader range of stages which may be useful for a more nuanced assessment (Haverkamp, 2007; Post-Dijkstra, et al., 2009).

2. The total set of indicators is limited for each eParticipation level. There are many more ICT media forms currently available for example, which are not included but are relevant (social networks and [simulation] games for example). The indicators are also focused on easily visible indicators, instead of also delving deeper into the governmental processes and organization. It is not enough for a government entity to say that it commits itself or acknowledges the citizen’s opinion, there should be evidence to indicate whether this is actually true and how this is realized.

3. Each indicator uses a binary score. This means that the researchers assess whether a media form or aspect is present or not. It says nothing about how an element is implemented or whether the media form is used by citizens or not. Consider the presence of a municipal forum which has no members and no posts; they would still score points in this benchmark.

4. The focus on national portals also creates a rather basic view of a country. This benchmark compares whole countries to each other, so this narrow focus could skew the results. Within this current research however, a focus has been chosen on the municipal level due to the findings of multiple researchers who indicate that citizens feel most involved and effective in their own municipalities. Focusing on municipalities, rather than ministries for example, should provide a better microcosm in which to evaluate eParticipation.

3.1.2 Overheid.nl Monitor

This Dutch benchmark was started in 1999 and has been executed every year up till now. In recent years it includes all provinces, municipalities, water boards and ministries. The overall goal is to measure the level of quality provided on these government websites. It measures 6 different factors: standards, transparency, service quality, citizen centrality, interactive references, and accessibility (Overheid.nl, 2009). These factors correspond respectively to the factors A-F in the figure below.
The most important conclusions which can be made about this benchmark can be outlined as follows:

- Different factors are clearly demarcated and contain a large set of indicators for each factor.
- While the types of factors are broader than many other benchmarks, the indicators only look at the surface of the government entity on their website. Each indicator is given a binary score if they do or do not have a component (Rentinck, et al., 2007), so while they succeed in evaluating a broader concept of eGovernment, the measurements themselves are not nuanced.
- It was created in a time when ICT implementation and expectations were understandably low, yet the changes that have been made do not reflect the advancements that have been made in eGovernment. It was originally only meant to last until 2007, but the benchmark has become very important for the government entities, especially municipalities (Sanders, 2009).
- The eParticipation aspect in this benchmark is also very limited, excluding many of the communication media forms possible and only asking very broad questions. It has essentially become a very technically-oriented benchmark with the connotation that municipalities simply place missing elements on their site to fulfill the requirement without really expending sufficient energy in citizen activity and quality (Rentinck, et al., 2007; Sanders, 2009).

3.1.3 Aichholzer Framework for Evaluating eDemocracy

While not an implemented benchmark in itself, proposed frameworks for evaluating eGovernment or eDemocracy are useful to analyze. Aichholzer et al. believe that the evaluation of eParticipation on several levels (not just technology) can “provide evidence of whether e-participation extends and enriches participation, or not” (Aichholzer, et al., 2009 p. 50). The proposed framework measures eDemocracy initiatives based on the following criteria (Aichholzer, et al., 2009):

- Type of engagement (information-consultation-active participation)
- Stage in decision-making
- Actors involved
- Technologies used

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2 http://monitor.overheid.nl/ranglisten?organisatiertype-gemeente
- Rules of engagement
- Duration and sustainability
- Accessibility
- Resources and Promotion
- Evaluation and Outcomes
- Critical success factors (to be agreed on before starting the initiative)
- Gender aspects
- Understanding of democratic principles, actors’ images of democracy.

Aichholzer also indicates that the ICT tools themselves can provide statistics for the measurement of success/maturity, namely the number of registered users, response numbers to questionnaires, messages posted on forums, and number of petitions and names included for example (Aichholzer, et al., 2009).

The most important conclusions which can be made about this benchmark can be outlined as follows:
- This framework definitely moves more in the direction of eParticipation and the relevant criteria needed to measure the state of eParticipation. There is a focus beyond the technical aspects and the easily visible surface criteria of a government website, which the previous benchmarks in this section maintained. The criteria mentioned above would complement the standard technical aspects within the new measurement tool.
- Little is said however, about how these individual criteria can and should be measured. The sources of statistics which were named may certainly provide a basis for these measurements, but it is clear that formulating practical indicators for non-technical aspects is still a knowledge gap.

3.1.4 Loukis eParticipation Evaluation Framework

Loukis proposes the following framework which is focused on eParticipation within parliamentary processes (Loukis, et al., 2008). This is also not an actual implemented measurement tool, but it proposes a very broad range of topics to evaluate eParticipation. The framework uses the three basic dimensions of information provision, consultation, and active participation across four different categories: Process, System, Context and Outcomes (Loukis, et al., 2008). A selection of the criteria is shown below to give an indication of the range of topics.

**Process Criteria** (Loukis, et al., 2008)
- Clarity of objectives
- Adequacy of resources (human, technical, financial)
- Quantity and quality of the background information provided to the participants
- Quality of the facilitator/moderator
- Sufficient and appropriate rules of consultation
- Analysis of contributions of participants
- Publication of the results and conclusions of the analysis of contribution
- Feedback to the participants concerning how their contributions will be (or have been) used and integrated in the Parliamentary decision-making process
• Commitment of the competent politicians and public servants

**System Criteria** (Loukis, et al., 2008)

- Appropriateness of the ICT system for engaging the targeted participants
- General ease of use of the ICT system by the participants
- Organization, simplicity and clarity of screens
- Simple error handling
- Accessibility by people with disabilities
- Ease of accessing the background information provided to the participants
- Ease of posting a contribution in the forum
- Technical quality (response time, downtime, etc.)

**Context Criteria** (Loukis, et al., 2008)

- Familiarity of the affected groups of citizens with ICT and Internet
- Familiarity of the Members of Parliament who participated with ICT and Internet
- Educational level of the affected groups of citizens with ICT and Internet
- Level of impact of the legislation under formation on the affected groups of citizens

**Outcome Criteria** (Loukis, et al., 2008)

- Extent of participation of citizens affected by the legislation under development
- Extent of participation of Members of Parliament
- Quality of contributions
- Extent of interaction among participants
- Impact of participants contributions on the legislation under development
- Impact on acceptance and applicability of this legislation
- Extent of strengthening the Parliamentary decision-making process
- Satisfaction of the citizens who participated

![Diagram](image.png)

**Figure 16 – Positioning of evaluation factors (Loukis, et al., 2008)**
The most important conclusions which can be made about this benchmark can be outlined as follows:

- As with the previous framework, little attention is given to how these criteria should be measured but the broad range of topics is very extensive and goes beyond the technically-focused indicators of other benchmarks. The selection of criteria listed above is applicable in the research of this new eParticipation measurement tool, yet it remains to be seen which factors can readily be measured.

- An attempt has also been made to position these non-technical indicators around a single output factor, as seen in Figure 16 above. While perhaps the exact same criterion (output) will not be chosen for this research, it is useful to link each criterion with others in order to analyze the relationships and interfaces within such a complex system.

### 3.1.5 Berenschot iBalans Measurement Tool

In preparation for the municipal elections of March 2010, Berenschot and Content Kings created an assessment of the local websites of different political parties (Leenaerts, et al., 2010). Their goal was to measure the extent to which eParticipatory elements were used on political websites not only to gain voters but also to include them in the campaign process. The focus of this measurement tool lies on the technology and service side of political eParticipation; ranging from aspects of response time for e-mails to the use of new social media (Facebook, Hyves, YouTube, Twitter, etc.) to reach citizens.

In this research project a focus was chosen on the municipal organization itself, and not the electoral process. However, many of the same elements used in this measurement tool are applicable in the design of a new measurement tool for municipalities. So for the technical portion of the new measurement tool, the indicators of this Berenschot model were used as a starting point.

The most important conclusions which can be made about this benchmark can be outlined as follows:

- Often simplistic in the use of indicators (i.e. binary scores).

- The tool includes many content elements, such as an agenda and election program; while this new measurement tool is focused on how eParticipation is facilitated, it is useful to recognize that certain content-related items such as the mayor’s profile or a page about citizen initiatives can serve as support for eParticipation (Leenaerts, et al., 2010). The support is based on having the right information and insight into municipal processes and functions in order to better participate.

### 3.2 Other Useful Research Elements and Recommendations

Throughout the literature on eParticipation there are many criticisms and recommendations made by researchers about current developments in (measuring) eParticipation. In this section these research elements will be highlighted since they can be of great use in creating design requirements and improving the quality of the subsequent design of the eParticipation measurement tool.

#### 3.2.1 Commitment and Other Organizational Aspects within Municipalities

There is often some skepticism about eParticipation amongst the public because government officials either forget or are unwilling to fully commit to the results of the discussion and provide feedback to the public about the outcomes and subsequent use of their input (Albrecht, 2008; Ferguson, 2006). An example of this can be seen in the figure below.
This is supported from the field of technology acceptance where the factors ease-of-use and usefulness influence the adoption rate of a service (Davis, 1989); the same is applicable in eParticipation because making something easy to use does not imply that it is also useful. Government officials often do not recognize this. They expect people to be active even if they do not make the activity useful by including it in their own policy-making processes and providing feedback to the public (Bannister, F., 2009). The lack of these feedback elements indicate that government entities are not fully committed even though this could be considered a criterion for success; “engagement must be embedded...[and] only works when organizations are prepared to listen” (Bannister, F., 2009 p. 120). It can also be unclear during which stages of decision-making processes citizens should be invited to participate and when feedback is necessary. There is a strong need for process design, discourse rules, and clarity on what the impact of deliberations will be on the outcomes (European Commission, 2007). This is a useful aspect to assess from an organizational viewpoint.

The Working Group on eGovernment in the Developing World (Working Group on E-Government in the Developing World, 2002) provides some useful recommendations on improving this organizational side of eParticipation. Though they are recommendations for government entities themselves on how to improve, these same concepts can be utilized as measurement indicators.

- Having sufficient numbers of skilled and ICT literate personnel
- Being able to cope with change management issues regarding organizational processes
- “Citizens are the e-government experts.” Their input and needs should be solicited in the design of eGovernment/eParticipation projects; this is often known as co-production.
- Having sufficient resources, personnel and training for handling public communications.

These criticisms and recommendations form an important motivation to use the aspect of municipal organization (the use of participatory outcomes within municipal policy-making processes) in the design of a new measurement tool.

3.2.2 Measurement Recommendations
As seen in the previous section, some aspects of eParticipation maturity or quality are hard to quantify; it is therefore useful to heed the commentary and recommendations given by researchers.
Ferguson, in the reports from the Digital Dialogues project (Ferguson, 2006), gives several recommendations for utilizing statistics to provide eParticipation indicators:

- Measure registrations, posts/comments, unique visitors and repeat visits.
- Page rankings in search engines are useful indicators
- Measure links with other relevant online communities and resources.

The International Center of Excellence for Local eDemocracy (ICELE) also provides some ways to gain metrics on eParticipation (ICELE, 2008):

- Subscriptions to RSS feeds
- Hits or page views
- Number of responses
- Exit surveys
- Content analysis
- Statistics from routine operations
- User surveys
- Stakeholder interviews
- Evaluator assessments

These recommendations can be used to link quantitative data to qualitative concepts. Although they may not provide a complete picture, since the level of activity does not necessarily mean it is being used effectively, this forms an improvement beyond binary measurements (yes/no). The goal of the measurement tool is to focus on generating empirical data, not measuring effectiveness.

### 3.2.3 Other Recommendations

The Ad Hoc Work Group Meeting of the United Nations came up with some recommendations in 2006 for improving the eParticipation index of the UN eGovernment survey (UN Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting, 2006). These recommendations also provide some useful insights and inspiration for a new model.

- The digital divide remains a concern for all government entities involved in eGovernment and eParticipation. Six kinds of socio-demographic factors can be identified that explain the divide: geography, income/social status, education, gender, age, and disabilities. eGovernment strategies and policies can be shaped to address the differences between individuals and groups, transitory gaps such as gender and age, and socio-economic gaps like education and income.
- There is a lack of marketing and publicizing of eParticipation (projects); this could account of lack of interest and participation.

These points can be translated into specific aspects within the design of the eParticipation measurement tool, such as the citizen inclusion aspect of the model, which is not a big focus within current eGovernment and eParticipation benchmarks. How these elements were incorporated into the design will be discussed in the following section by identifying several design requirements.
3.3 Requirements for Design

In the previous two sub-sections, specific elements have been identified from earlier benchmarks, proposed frameworks, and other recommendations from literature. These elements can be summed up into a set of functional design requirements as part of step 3 of Herder’s Design Cycle described in section 2.5.1.

1. The measurement tool should assess 3 aspects: the technical facilitation of eParticipation through the municipal website, the inclusion and type of citizens participating, and the organizational aspects which complement online participation.

Aichholzer recommends several elements which fall under these 3 categories including: stages in the decision-making process, the actors involved, and the technologies used (Aichholzer, et al., 2009). Loukis adds to this by recommending process governance criteria (moderation, feedback, etc.), accessibility elements and technical quality (among others) (Loukis, et al., 2008). Lastly, the useful elements from these frameworks are supported by arguments by Ferguson, Bannister, and the European Commission about the necessity for eParticipation being imbedded in the organization and providing proper feedback to citizens (Bannister, F., 2009; European Commission, 2007; Ferguson, 2006).

Specific recommendations shown in the previous sub-sections from these sources should be made into measurement tool indicators. These include the level of feedback and communication with citizens, level of resources and training available, and the use of demographics for example.

2. The measurement tool should attempt to link these aspects together by using visual models for the purpose of undemanding communication and insight into the complexities of the system.

While the relationships (shown in the previous sub-section) between Loukis’ factors are not specifically relevant here (Loukis, et al., 2008), the use of this type of analysis is useful. If relationships can be made between the technical aspects, the citizen inclusion aspects, and the organizational aspects then the conclusions and results can be linked back to choice of media forms and the quality of their current implementation. In this way municipalities can make concrete changes for their website based on a strategic choice apparent within one of the other categories. This supports the objective of the tool to help improve municipalities facilitate eParticipation.

3. The measurement tool should include a broad range of ICT media forms (ranging from very simple to complex technologies).

This requirement is a reaction to the lack of analysis in specific media forms with the UN benchmark and Overheid.nl Monitor (Overheid.nl, 2009; United Nations, 2008) and the recommended media forms listed in other literature sources (Albrecht, 2008; Ferguson, 2006; Kafentzis, et al., 2009; ICELE, 2008; Stegeman, 2008; Rentinck, et al., 2007; Tambouris, et al., 2007).

4. The measurement tool should categorize the ICT media forms used with a broad range of levels.

This aspect is useful in determining different patterns and aspects within the use of media forms, not just uniformly on the level of comparing specific media forms with each other (Loukis, et al., 2008; Overheid.nl, 2009). Examples could include how innovative the municipal website is or what types of participation they are facilitating (Ferguson, 2006; Post-Dijkstra, et al., 2009).

5. The measurement tool should use different demographical aspects to connect ICT media forms with different types of citizens.

This requirement relates to the 2nd main aspect within the measurement tool: the inclusion of citizens. Various researchers (Aichholzer, et al., 2009; Loukis, et al., 2008; UN Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting,
advise using demographical aspects to analyze eParticipation from more than just a technical perspective.

6. **The measurement tool should use a nuanced scoring system for indicators wherever possible to indicate not only whether an element exists but also how this element is used or implemented. Binary scores should be avoided where possible.**

This requirement is another reaction to the lack of complex measurement indicators found in other benchmarks like the UN benchmark and Overheid.nl Monitor (Overheid.nl, 2009)(United Nations, 2008). The purpose is to provide a more nuanced assessment of the level of facilitation being provided from the measured activity and quality of the media forms, not just their presence or lack thereof.

7. **The measurement tool should be tailored specifically for municipalities.**

As mentioned before in the demarcation, the focus of this research is on the municipal level of government. The aspects within the measurement tool should reflect the content which is relevant for municipal websites and related external websites (i.e. for social media like twitter).

8. **The measurement tool should use (where possible) quantitative data as a source of metrics (examples include member registrations, number of posts, etc.)**

As suggested by several researchers (Aichholzer, et al., 2009; Ferguson, 2006; ICELE, 2008), many media forms have data available which can help to quantify the measurements.

9. **The measurement tool should have additional elements which address informational and accessibility needs which help to facilitate eParticipation.**

Based on an aspect of the Berenschot iBalans Measurement tool (Leenaerts, et al., 2010), there are content-related aspects which can help support the facilitation of eParticipation via the municipal website. These aspects include profiles of officials and voting behavior of the city council, but also elements like the transparency of the website in the form of a disclaimer or proclaimer. It is also useful to measure the level of accessibility for disadvantaged persons, as citizens should not be excluded from participating online (Loukis, et al., 2008).
4 Design of the Measurement Tool

In this section the design of the eParticipation measurement tool is described. This description is divided into 3 sub-sections according to the system demarcation: the website (ICT), the citizen (citizen inclusion), and the municipal organization. This section contains the main model elements, for more detail refer to Appendix B – Description of the eParticipation Measurement Tool.

The measurement tool was built using Microsoft Excel. This application is useful in collecting raw data and transforming it using mathematical functions. It is also useful in performing simple statistical measurements and creating graphs. All of the outcomes of the literature research and evaluation of previous benchmarks and measurement tools were implemented using an Excel model. The model includes a data input sheet and several others where the calculations for the ICT, citizen, and municipal aspects were placed. All visual outputs were also created using Excel graphs.

4.1 Measurement Tool Part 1 – ICT Facilitation

The design description section begins with the ICT aspect of the measurement tool. This aspect is the basis for the whole tool; this is where data is filled in based on observations of the municipal websites and these are then linked to the subsequent sections of the tool (citizen inclusion and municipal organization).

4.1.1 Selection of ICT Media Forms

The first element is the selection of which media forms to measure with the tool. The purpose of this measurement tool aspect is to test how well municipalities are facilitating eParticipation on their website through the use of different forms of media. This will be shown in both the selection of media forms which are used and how actively these chosen media forms are put to use. Since this part is evaluated from outside the organization, it can be used as a benchmarking tool. This was originally not the intended purpose of the measurement tool, as it was initially expected that the measurement of the website itself would involve more interaction with the municipality; this would take too much time however, since multiple people would need to be approached for each municipality for specific data. For this reason, indicators were chosen which were visible to every user. This forms a weakness with regard to the original objective, but as a consequence it is more suited for benchmarking.

In section 3.1, previous benchmarks on eParticipation were discussed and found to have a very limited set of formats and/or remain vague in their assessment of these media forms. Based on these deficiencies and the recommendations for specific media forms found within other literature (Albrecht, 2008; Ferguson, 2006; Kafentzis, et al., 2009; ICELE, 2008; Stegeman, 2008; Rentinck, et al., 2007; Tambouris, et al., 2007), the following set has been selected for the measurement tool:

**Standard**
- Email / Newsletter / Short Message Service (SMS) / Poll / Survey

**Innovative**
- Real Simple Syndication (RSS) Feed / Blog / Forum / Webcasting
- Social Networks (LinkedIn, Facebook, Hyves) / Twitter
- Media Community (Flickr, YouTube) / Chat / Interactive Map
Experimental

- Simulation or Game / ePetition / Wiki / Virtual World
- Participatory Budget / Chatbot / Group Support System

These media forms have been categorized in order to indicate their relative status. Standard forms of media have been around for quite awhile, innovative media contains many Web 2.0 aspects such as social networks and indicates an increasingly popular segment of media, and the experimental media contains elements which are of potential use but are (as of yet) used rarely (Ferguson, 2006). Some of these media forms are more oriented towards cultural or educational uses; as the municipalities also plays a role here, these types of aspects have been included within the concept of eParticipation. While they do not have to be directly connected to decision-making processes, the exploration and discussion of these issues can be seen as a problem formulation aspect or as citizens supporting the municipal processes themselves. Another aspect here is the concept of interaction versus participation. eParticipation does not necessarily directly mean interaction, although this does become a key characteristic of deeper forms of participation. This relationship is shown through the use of the participation ladder in the following sub-section. Many of the media forms above are used for informing and communicating with citizens; as long as it is related to some form of eParticipation topic (municipal issues, policies, etc.) then it is useful to measure. Due to the exploratory nature of this research, a very broad selection of media forms is useful in order to identify the full scope of processes and experiments which are occurring in municipalities. A downside to this however, is that scores will generally be low across the board as not all municipalities will have every element; it is also possible that certain media forms are not found at all (or indeed used at all in the future in this capacity). At this point the measurement tool does not provide an answer to how useful these media forms are for eParticipation, nor does it include the possibility that media forms are to a certain extent substitutes for each other and not complementary. This aspect will be discussed in the section on the outcomes and the reflection.

Next to these media forms there is also a category of elements which has been labeled Support. This category contains items like profiles, accessibility, and disclaimers for example (see Appendix B – Description of the eParticipation Measurement Tool for more detail). These items are not media forms but provide either content/information, process transparency, or another type of support which are helpful for eParticipation. Each of these media forms has at least one indicator for measurement, ranging from simple presence to the number of members per municipal resident. One example is shown below in Figure 19. This is an example of a typical set of indicators. On the one hand, user activity is measured (and corrected for the size of the municipality by dividing by the number of residents) and on the other hand the activity of the municipality in how often they send out a message per month. For external media forms (those that are not hosted on the municipal website, such as social networks, twitter, etc.) a notation is made whether or not these media forms are linked on the municipal website. For a complete description of all indicators, see Appendix B – Description of the eParticipation Measurement Tool.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th># members / residents*10.000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Municipality</td>
<td># tweets / month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>link on website municipality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 19 – Example indicators for Twitter
4.1.2 Categorizing the Forms of eParticipation

As seen in the section on the evaluation of previous benchmarks and frameworks, there are several different types of categorizations which are used, often using a 3 level model (e.g. eInforming, eConsultation, and Active participation or e-enabling, e-engaging and e-empowering). In this research however it is more useful to use a more nuanced approached with more levels in order to be more specific in relating media forms with eParticipation. For this reason the participation ladder, as presented by Haverkamp, Post, and Stegeman (Haverkamp, 2007; Post-Dijkstra, et al., 2009; Stegeman, 2008), was chosen. The participation ladder is shown in the figure below.

![Figure 20 – The participation ladder (Post-Dijkstra, et al., 2009)](attachment_url)

The participation ladder is a classification of 6 forms of participation: informing, consulting, advising, coproducing, co-deciding, and self-governing. This last concept is not relevant to this research because the focus is on eParticipation through the municipal website, which is a platform for the municipality and the citizen together.

The participation levels which are used in this research can be defined as follows (Albrecht, 2008; Bannister, F., 2009; Ferguson, 2006; Committee of Ministers, 2009; Parycek, et al., 2009; Post-Dijkstra, et al., 2009):

- Informing – a one-way provision of information about public affairs and the municipal organization. This is often considered a condition of success for other forms of participation (Albrecht, 2008).
- Consulting – expertise, opinions, and/or votes are used to poll for the perspective of the citizen on selected topics. The government is not obliged to act on these perspectives but may use them as a basis for policy. The communication is often between a municipality and citizens individually.
- Advising – this type of participation expands consultation into a group discussion where citizens can deliberate together with the municipality about problems or policy alternatives. The outcomes have a
little more weight within the municipal organization, though they can take a different path when it comes time to form policy.

- **Coproducing** – coproduction is a form of participation where the agenda is set together with the citizens and a new policy or service is created together. The municipality is beholden to the results of the process.
- **Co-decision** (“meebeslissen”) – A type of participation where the municipality asks citizens to make a binding choice about a selection of policy alternatives.

The purpose of using the participation ladder is to relate the media forms which can be used on the website to the types of participation which exist. This is important as organizations can choose what type of participation and democratic forms they wish to follow; it is a strategic choice (e.g. a representative democracy versus a more participative democracy). If a relationship can be made between the media forms and specific types of participation, then municipalities can make choices for certain investments based on the democratic strategy they wish to employ.

Based on this reasoning, the measurement tool makes a use of a matrix relating these two concepts with each other in order to provide data on how each municipality scores on each level of the participation ladder (see Appendix B – Description of the eParticipation Measurement Tool).

### 4.1.3 Visualizing the ICT Facilitation Outcomes

The data which serves as output is also transformed into visual models in the form of Excel graphs. These visual additions illustrate key concepts on different levels of abstraction and multiple dimensions, while also providing an effective aid in communicating to others free of jargon (Grant, et al., 2005). For this aspect histograms were chosen to visualize the scores for each municipality; this is one of the simplest ways to indicate levels and compare them between municipalities. These models will be presented in section 6.1.

### 4.2 Measurement Tool Part 2 – Citizen Inclusion

In this section the citizen inclusion aspect of the measurement tool will be outlined. The objective of including this aspect within the measurement tool is to analyze who is being included in the participation process and what types of people are being addressed by the municipal website.

#### 4.2.1 Classifying Citizen Types and Behavior

There are two elements with regard to citizen inclusion which are important: the range of people who are being included (which is often linked to accessibility issues for people with disabilities or immigrants) and the type of people who are being included (often with the goal of creating acceptable representativity). Tests with regard to accessibility are already available in the form of webrichtlijnen.nl and drempelvrij.nl.

For this reason, this aspect was included in the Support aspect of the ICT Data section. Here, the focus will remain on the types of people being included.

As specified in the design requirements, the measurement tool should make use of demographical information in order to classify the types of citizens who participate online via the municipal website. The expectations of how this would be implemented changed somewhat due to the lack of information available about online users. Various sources (Albrecht, 2008; Committee of Ministers, 2009; Islam, 2008) recommend the use of demographics to classify users by gender, age, race, income, and education for example. Most of this data is available to the public via municipal statistical information. Having this data and being able to assess what the impact of education or income is on eParticipation or web usage are two very different things however. The amount of research linking these two aspects is very limited. The
consequence of this limitation is that the actor analysis aspect is limited to two elements: a classification of the media forms in relation to Forrester’s Social Technographic roles and a case study interview question about demographic strategy based on Forrester’s data. These two elements will be described in the section below.

Part of the desk research for this eParticipation research involved literature in which the use of new social media was analyzed from the perspectives of private firms trying to connect and involve their (potential) customers. In the book Groundswell (Li, et al., 2008), the authors from Forrester Research use a profiling technique to classify web use according to 6 roles: inactives, spectators, joiners, collectors, critics, and creators. The roles are explained in the figure below.

![Forrester Social Technographics](image)

**Figure 21 – Forrester Social Technographics (Li, et al., 2008)**

Forrester has collected data from various countries including the Netherlands on what percentage of the population is what type of role, as shown in the figure below. Totals go beyond 100% as a person can have more than one role.
They have also classified these roles for gender and age, a matrix of this data is shown in the table below. The matrix has been colored to indicate relative weight. This data is based on a survey of the Netherlands as a whole; it is possible that among municipalities there could be some significant differences in the ratios. This set of data is from 2009 and must be updated every year in order to remain useful.

Table 1 – Technographics data per category in percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Inactives</th>
<th>Spectators</th>
<th>Joiners</th>
<th>Collectors</th>
<th>Critics</th>
<th>Creators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(18-24)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(25-34)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(35-44)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(45-54)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(55+)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What this matrix shows is that the spectator and joiner roles are the most active roles that people have, while critics and creators are only moderately active among 18 to 34 year olds. Collectors are the least active roles, but there are relatively more among the younger two age categories. In terms of gender there is not much of a difference except in the spectator and joiner roles, where males are relatively more active in spectating and less in joining. In terms of a general trend with regard to the type of roles commonly seen, this corresponds roughly with data from Burger@Overheid which measured the most common activities on a political website (see Figure 23).

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The use of these roles to classify citizens is in part supported by research done by TNO (Netherlands Organization for Applied Scientific Research) on the impact of new media on the government (Frissen, 2008). Frissen et al. indicate that users are getting a more active role in generating value (see Figure 24), moving from consumption and feedback towards facilitation and creation. These roles have an approximate comparison with the Social Technographic roles. An increase in content-generation and involvement in governance can have an impact of the structure of government and the balance of power (Frissen, 2008).

Including such measurements within the measurement tool provides data on the direction of the type of involvement that municipalities are facilitating for their citizens. The government can base their strategy on this information with regards to the amount of power they wish to give their citizens and what the role of the municipality should be. Forrester refers to this as building an appropriate social strategy (Li, et al., 2008). Originally, the measurement tool used the data from the table to calculate a score which indicated to what extent the municipality was fulfilling the pattern based on age and gender. However, the results lacked any significant patterns or conclusions which were relevant. For this reason, the data was used as a basis for asking municipalities if their experiences conformed to the patterns shown in the
data and if they had their own particular strategy based on age difference, gender, or another demographical aspect.

4.2.2 Relationship with ICT Facilitation
The Social Technographics roles were used in the measurement tool by linking these roles with relevant forms of media. A matrix of weights was created and multiplied by the ICT scores. This provides a score for the social technographics roles, which indicates the level at which the municipal websites focus on the range of roles which citizens can have. These scores will be analyzed in section 6.1.

4.2.3 Visualizing the Citizen Inclusion Outcomes
For this aspect, the output of the Excel data is used to create spider and bar graphs. The spider graphs present the outcomes per municipality in such a way that patterns become more visible. The bar graphs are used to present the data in a more standard manner where the overall trend line is more visible. These visual additions illustrate key concepts on different levels of abstraction and multiple dimensions, while also providing an effective aid in communicating to others free of jargon (Grant, et al., 2005). These models will be presented in section 6.1.

4.3 Measurement Tool Part 3 – Municipal Organization
The third and final aspect of the measurement tool is the organization of the municipality itself. The website is the online “front-office” for eParticipation, so it is crucial that the offline “back-office” is capable of supporting this. The design requirements specify that a measurement should be made of these capabilities and scored. During the design phase, it became apparent that this aspect would be slightly premature. There is at this time no complete set of best practices about what is “good” and “bad” for an organization using eParticipation. Previous benchmarks and frameworks have many suggestions (Aichholzer, et al., 2009; Grant, et al., 2005; Islam, 2008) but this is not backed up by statistical data. For this reason the municipal organizational aspect of the measurement tool has evolved into two parts: a connection between the participation ladder and the policy cycle, and a set of open interview questions for the municipal case studies.

The policy cycle element is based on recommendations from researchers (Aichholzer, et al., 2009; European Commission, 2007) in order to determine where citizens could be participate and how media forms on the municipal website were tailored to the different phases of the policy cycle (as discussed previously in section 3.3. The open interview questions are not technically part of the measurement tool as they do not provide any eventual score or assessment. The data from these questions can be used in the future however, to create quantifiable indicators. This will be expanded upon in the section on recommendations for future research.

4.3.1 Participation Forms and the Policy Cycle
Multiple eParticipation researchers (Haverkamp, 2007; Loukis, et al., 2008; Tambouris, et al., 2007; Ferguson, 2006; Central Office of Information, 2009) make a connection between the different forms of participation and the different policy phases (see Figure 25):

- agenda-setting
- analysis, sometimes called design
- policy creation or decision-making
- implementation
- monitoring or evaluation
Analyzing the forms of participation in relation to the policy cycle is useful because it places citizen participation in the lifecycle of municipal processes. As seen from the field of process management (Bruijn, et al., 2003), the input from stakeholders and the openness of the process differ as projects progress. This is also true for citizen participation where the role of their input is more useful in the agenda-setting phase than in the implementation phase for example. Municipalities can adapt the use of eParticipation to those phases which they want to focus on; knowing which participation forms (and thus also the specific media forms) which are most useful in a particular phase can be very useful.

Haverkamp makes use of a matrix connecting the participation forms and the policy cycle during his interviews with municipalities, but the focus is on the availability of specific media forms per category and the opinions of the municipality in terms of usefulness and obstacles (Haverkamp, 2007). The Central Office of Information (United Kingdom) also makes use of a matrix to indicate where different types of participation per phase of the policy cycle are recommended, nice to have, or needs careful thought (Central Office of Information, 2009). The same basic framework was used to create a matrix in the measurement tool with weights to identify which forms of participation were most useful during all the phases of the policy cycle. Each form can be appropriate for multiple phases. The data used is based on the abovementioned researchers and other expert opinions, for more details see Appendix B – Description of the eParticipation Measurement Tool.

It is necessary to mention here that the outcome of this part of the measurement tool says something about fulfilling the potential use of these participation forms in the policy cycle; this does not necessarily mean that the municipality has chosen to apply it in such a way. The outcomes were used as a basis for discussion during the case study interview. In the future, if data can be collected (possibly through surveys) on how municipalities actually use certain media forms during the policy cycle or even what their intention is for use, then these aspects can be compared and analyzed for mismatches.
4.3.2 Important Themes and Success Factors for eParticipation

The second aspect explores the concepts which previous research has indicated is crucial in generating successful eParticipation projects; as outlined in sections 3.1 and 3.2. Since it was not possible to generate a feasible scoring system apart from the policy cycle, three main questions were developed for the case study interviews (the third question will be handled in the following sub-section).

The first question involves discussion about major themes which play a part in an organization making use of eParticipation. These themes include:

1. The level of awareness, knowledge, and information about eParticipation
2. The level of training available for employees (from manuals to workshops)
3. The level of communication, feedback, and evaluation with citizens (reports, meetings, defined standard operating procedures, etc.)
4. The level of resources available for (e)Participation (time, money, employees)
5. The level of defined objectives, formal agreements/plans, and responsibilities (senior leadership presence, eParticipation directives, etc.)

The second question is based on some output of the ICT section of the measurement tool. Each municipality had at least some media forms where response was possible from citizens. These were noted for each municipality and during the case study interviews, they were asked to reflect on whether they received any relevant input via the channels and what occurred with that information. Most of the interviewees were from the Communication department, but they were not always able to provide specific feedback with regards to this question. They would have needed more time than allocated for the interview to find out such information, outside of the fact that these items are not always collected in the same place or noted down somewhere. Nevertheless, most respondents were able to provide general answers about what occurred with input from citizens via the relevant channels.

4.3.3 Municipal Roles and Relationships

During the desk research phase it was recognized that people and relationships are important in determining success with eParticipation (Loukis, et al., 2008). For this reason it was also noted as a sub-research question. The third question is about the relationships between different departments and their roles within eParticipation. The interviewees were asked to reflect on the relationships between the following functions and departments:

- The City Council
- The College of Alderman (including the mayor)
- The Municipal Secretary
- The Information and Automation (Information Technology) Department
- The Communication Department

They were asked to base their reflection on the following concepts (Post-Dijkstra, et al., 2009):

- Strategy formation
- Problem formulation
- Policy development
- Innovation of services and processes
- Managing Information and Communication
- Any aspect of the policy cycle
4.3.4 Visualizing the Municipal Organization Outcomes
The data which serves as output is also transformed into visual models in the form of Excel graphs. These visual additions illustrate key concepts on different levels of abstraction and multiple dimensions, while also providing an effective aid in communicating to others free of jargon (Grant, et al., 2005). For this aspect, the output of the Excel data is used to create spider graphs. The spider graphs present the outcomes per municipality in such a way that patterns become more visible. These models will be presented in section 6.1.

4.4 Design Conclusions
The three different aspects of the measurement tool as outlined above (ICT facilitation, citizen inclusion, and municipal organization) reflect the design requirements created in the second step of Design Cycle. Together these elements can provide an indication of the state of eParticipation in Dutch municipalities. The description above represents the final iteration of the designed artefact. In the following section on the verification and evaluation of the measurement tool, a description will be provided about how this design was improved through the use of expert interviews and other methods.
5 Verification and Evaluation

This section describes three different elements where verification and evaluation are relevant. These elements include the measurement tool, the input from experts, and the use of case studies to test the measurement tool.

5.1 Verification and Evaluation of the Measurement Tool

5.1.1 Excel Verification

Due to the relative complexity and scope of the Excel model used to create the measurement tool it was important to test the data and formulae for accuracy and correctness. Extreme value testing was used to monitor whether the scores did not exceed 100% for example. The matrices which were used to link different aspects of the model were also tested for different scales: 0-3, 0-5 and 0-10. The scale 0-5 was chosen ultimately because of its balance between a more nuanced scale (0-3 caused a lot of polarization in the scores) and a scale which was easy to fill in by experts. In testing the correctness of the formulae used, the verification was done partially by meticulous visual assessment and partially by making use of Excel’s tracing function (which can plot all precedent and dependent links of cells used in formulae).

5.1.2 Excel Evaluation

The tool was first evaluated by measuring 17 different municipalities. As mentioned previously, the eParticipation movement within municipalities is still in its infancy (Committee of Ministers, 2009); this means that the municipal websites chosen for study are mostly those larger municipalities who are actively experimenting with eParticipation. Nonetheless, smaller municipalities were also chosen to provide a representative contrast. The number of residents of these municipalities ranges from 4,500 to 750,000. The selection is based on desk research where certain municipalities became visible as active experimenters, and others were recommended through expert interviews.

The complete list is as follows: Almere, Amsterdam, Den Haag, Renswoude, Texel, Utrecht, Groningen, Delft, Dordrecht, Eindhoven, Breda, Tilburg, Rotterdam, Houten, Zoetermeer, Amersfoort, and Reeuwijk.

Aside from being used as an evaluation test, the outcomes per municipality are used in an initial analysis on the state of eParticipation in Dutch municipalities, see section 6.1. Six of these 17 municipalities were chosen for a more in depth case study. This data complements that which is found by the measurement tool; the case selection will be discussed in section 5.3.
5.2 Evaluation by Experts

Another method used to evaluate the measurement tool was to interview experts from different fields (but still related to eParticipation) and organizations. Their experience and external perspectives helped to spot the strengths and weaknesses of the measurement tool. The outcomes of these interviews encompass not only reflections on the measurement tool but also eParticipation concepts in general. The list of experts and the interview notes can be found in Appendix C – Interview Notes.

The feedback on the measurement tool ranged from very simple items to more complex issues. The suggestions were used to build a better iteration of the measurement tool; although some aspects were not included (these will be noted below and discussed in the reflection on feedback and the proposed changes in section 6.3. Some of the suggestions and comments include:

- Be clear about administrative vs. “ambtelijk”; in English literature the organization is often referred to as the administration, but this does not translate well into Dutch. This was fixed.
- Use the Motivaction roles to complement the Forrester Social Technographics roles. This will be discussed in the section on recommendations for further research.
- The need for information during the implementation phase shouldn’t be underappreciated; this refers to the matrix connecting the participation forms with the policy cycle. This was changed.
- How comparable are the municipalities through the measurement tool; it is quite possible to see a significant difference between large, medium and small municipalities because of resources and knowledge among others. There could also be some outliers like larger municipalities in terms of territory but small in terms of the number of residents. This will be discussed in the section on recommendations for further research.
- Make sure to use descriptive explanations in interviews with municipalities, avoid use of the Excel data. This was applied.
- The ICT department often forms a large obstacle in using new applications on the website. Their focus for the website is on security and robustness, not as a communication platform. This was asked about during the case study interviews.
- One possible issue with the measurement tool is that it doesn’t measure all the activity outside of the municipal website. This will be included in the reflection section.
- The themes and success factors for municipalities were also discussed; such as what types of training existed, and the departmental functions in relation to each other. These were used during the case study interviews.
- Use of the word Groupware is very broad, a Wiki is also groupware. This media form was changed to group support systems.
- The Communication department is often where the municipal officials are who deal with eParticipation. As a result of this information the case study interviews were most often planned with officials from this department.
- The data of the Social Technographics matrix was questioned as personal experience indicated that a larger proportion of older people (55+) were online than suggested. This was also asked about during the case study interviews.
- The participation forms are often difficult to define; people sometimes have different expectations, especially in translating them to specific media forms. Multiple people were used to create the matrix which connected these two concepts; this will be discussed further in the reflection section.
- Verbeterdebuurt.nl was recommended by two interviewees as an example of a useful website making using of geographic maps. This was made a part of the indicator for the digital map media form.
All other opinions and outcomes outside of those about the measurement tool itself will be discussed in the section on the measurement outcomes.

5.3 Case Study Evaluation
This sub-section will be used to discuss the evaluation aspects of the case studies used in this research. The following municipal cases were chosen: Dordrecht, Eindhoven, Breda, Almere, Amersfoort, and Reeuwijk (see section 2.5.4).

It is useful to mention how the case study interviews were conducted, with regard to the focus on model evaluation and measurement outcomes. The following outline was maintained as protocol during the case study interviews conducted with 6 municipalities:

- Introduction of research and background
- Presentation and reflection on eParticipation definition and purpose.
- Presentation of ICT outcomes for the municipality
- Reflection by municipality on these outcomes (evaluation aspect)
- Open questions about internal workings of the municipality
- Recommendations for the municipality based on general and specific findings

Within this protocol there are three main objectives: discussion of eParticipation as a concept (forming a shared impression), evaluating the outcomes of the measurement tool, and complementing these outcomes with a contextual description of the internal workings of the municipality.
6 Measurement and Analysis of eParticipation

This section covers three analysis elements: the outcomes of the measurement tool itself, the outcomes of the case study interviews, and the feedback from these case studies on the measurement tool. As indicated before in the research method section, any conclusions taken from this data are not necessarily representative for all municipalities. These exploratory outcomes serve as a step forward in defining the field for further research. In measuring these media forms the type of content handled was very broad with regard to the definition of policy-formation (i.e. educational and cultural aspects were included).

It is necessary to mention that while it is possible for municipalities to get a 100% score, it is neither very feasible nor likely to be desired. An example of this is the investment into social networks: while it is possible to create a Facebook, Hyves, and LinkedIn page (and even other social networks like MySpace, etc.), this would require managing all 3 pages and making sure they are consistent and moderated properly. Few organizations would be willing to invest in this and the marginal value is perhaps limited. The function of this aspect is to allow for the full range of eParticipation aspects to be measured. This does mean however that an analysis in terms of good or bad are simply relative to the possible 100% score without indicating a desired norm. The desired norm is rather subjective at this time due to the unknowns which still exist in the field with regard to the effectiveness and feasibility of eParticipation investments. It is more useful to focus on each score relative to other municipalities. This concept will be discussed further in the conclusion and indicates a limitation of this research.

6.1 Measurement Tool Outcomes

In this section the measurement tool outcomes are split into two parts: the raw data and the municipal scores.

6.1.1 Raw Data Analysis

All the data will be analyzed per media form. For more information on each media form and its indicators, see Appendix B – Description of the eParticipation Measurement Tool. It is useful to mention again that the media forms described below are sometimes applicable to eGovernment services. The measurements below reflect the activity and/or character of the media form, generally regardless of the content used. Email for example, can be used for both; the test reflects a generic level of response time and quality since the content of an eParticipatory email can vary. Also, eParticipation has been defined by researchers to include informing as a type of participation. Even though this is only a one-way action, it can be considered step 0 in the full participation ladder (see section 4.1.2).

6.1.1.1 Standard Media Forms

Email

The municipal email service was tested using a fake email address. Each municipality received an email from a Fred Appelsma with the question:

*Do you have an online newsletter which I can subscribe to and how often is it sent out?*

This is a typical simple question which is asked via email; it is often considered the easiest form of communication (Gauld, et al., 2008). The content of the question was partially based on the fact that it was often not indicated how often a newsletter was sent. The methodology of the email quality indicator is based on previous research done by Gauld et al. on the responsiveness of e-government in Australia and New Zealand (Gauld, et al., 2008). Here the measurement is based on whether a simple website link was given as answer, one part was answered, both parts were answered, or whether the answer was above and beyond what is strictly necessary. This could include extra information on how to find the newsletter or
other sources of news like an RSS feed or twitter account. While based on specific elements, the score is based on the subjectivity of the analyst.

Every municipality makes use of email, this is no surprise. The average score was a 1.94 of a total possible 4 points; most municipalities provided a simple answer to the question if they had a newsletter, and if they did then they most often did not indicate how often this newsletter was sent. A few municipalities went “above and beyond” and also indicated other communication channels which were available. This is especially an opportunity for those municipalities who choose not to use a newsletter but have other means available (this was rarely utilized). The response time was generally better; the average response time was 1.29 days. Most municipalities indicate their response time will be within 3 or 4 working days, so this objective is consistently met. 2 of the 17 municipalities however did not send a response at all. While this measurement was taken only once, and as such is not fully representative, each municipality is required to respond to all relevant emails.

Newsletter
An online newsletter is a service which compiles news items from the website and sends them via email. 6 of the 17 tested municipalities have no newsletter. While 3 of these are among the smallest municipalities, the other 3 are much larger. This does not indicate a pattern as such. 3 of the 17 municipalities allow for a personalized newsletter. This could be related to the extensiveness of the news section of these municipalities, but a personalization per theme could still be done. Coupled to this, only 4 of the 17 indicate how often the newsletter is sent. This is not very transparent, but might be related to a general irregularity in the newsletters themselves.

SMS (Short Message Service)
SMS is a popular mobile application in the Netherlands; it can be used to send short messages to people on their mobile phones. The SMS media format is measured by a test of presence; two types have been identified: SMS services where the municipality sends a message to its citizens and one where citizens can send messages to their municipality. 8 municipalities advertised the use of SMS in some form on the website and only 2 of these have an SMS service where citizens can send messages to municipality. The two examples which were seen for informational SMS services were SMS-Alert (which is connected to police broadcasts) and CityGuide. Evidently, these municipalities see no other opportunities. One example of a more participative SMS service has been implemented in Amersfoort. SMS Kruiskamp allows citizens to send a message about problems in their neighborhood.

Poll
Polls are simple surveys where one statement or question is voted on through a set of possible answers (see Figure 27). Although polls are relatively easy to implement with regard to technical limitations, only 4 municipalities make use of this media form. Every poll also showed the results, but this is no surprise as this is standard in polling applications. Only 1 of these 4 allowed people to send in a reaction about the poll.
Surveys are a more complex form of statistical research, as opposed to a simple poll. Respondents are given a series of questions about a particular theme. Demographical aspects are often noted in order to provide a context to the subsequent statistical analysis of the data. These often form the basis of more expansive research processes for the municipal council for example.

In contrast to the simple poll, the more complex and substantial survey was implemented more often; 9 of the 17 municipalities present surveys on their website. This is likely the result of an active research department within those municipalities. The average number of surveys per year is approximately 3.78 times. Two of these municipalities provided unclear information on the frequency of measurements. In contrast, Almere sends out surveys 2 times a month or 24 times a year; though it is probable that these are less extensive than the other surveys. Response for these surveys was relatively high, with lowest average having 321 respondents and the highest at 1850. Looking at the average number of respondents per resident however, the average is around 50-80 with the lowest at 10.70. This does indicate that the relative representativity of these surveys is far from optimal. Most of the municipalities using surveys also showed the results although some were not as transparent as others (placed loosely in news items, instead of archived as reports). What was very interesting is that all of the municipalities using surveys also made use of survey panels (“burgerpanels”). This is likely in order to maintain a consistent pool of respondents and higher return rates for surveys. This does place some doubt on the representativity considering only actively participative citizens are likely to sign up for such a panel.

6.1.1.2 Innovative Media Forms

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) Feed

An RSS feed is a simple service which is similar to an online newsletter in that it aggregates news items and other messages and allows a user to subscribe to this feed. Users need their own application or browser to download the messages, they can use the same application for multiple feeds. There are two main types of items which are implemented as feeds: general news items and press releases. 12 municipalities make use of an RSS, making it the fifth most used media form alongside Twitter. The average amount of messages per week is 2.27 which seems ample, although it is likely that larger
municipalities have more messages to post per week. A bit surprising is that only 9 of these municipalities also provide an explanation of how to use an RSS feed. While RSS feeds are becoming pretty standard across the Web, a municipality would still need to help out all possible users on their website. These RSS feeds were not always easy to find either; this is probably the result of integrating an RSS module in an older content management system or general inexperience.

BLOG

A web log or “blog” is an online journal or news publication where an individual or group posts regular items for viewing by the public. Generally these users can react and discuss the blog post. Two types of blogs were tested: news and personal blogs. All news sections are considered blogs for the purposes of this measurement tool, if there is no response possible then it simply does not receive more than 1 point. As a result, every municipality had a news blog but only Amsterdam had one where response was possible. Personal blogs are usually written by the council clerk (raadsgriffier), alderman or mayor (see Figure 28). There were 6 municipalities with personal blogs; three of which allowed citizens to react and two of these three had multiple officials contributing to the blog. This would seem to indicate that there is very little interest in allowing response to news blogs; possibly because of the limited chance of abundant responses. Municipalities do regularly update their news items with an average of 26.37 posts per month, although the lowest average is 1.04. On the personal blog side there are some experiments being done, but not many also want to commit to allowing direct reaction. On the one hand this is understandable given the uncertainties involved (spam / insulting responses), but part of the success of these media forms lies in utilizing the complete concept. The uncertainties can be managed to a certain extent but this takes knowledge and extra effort; not something which every municipality is willing or capable of doing. The activity here is 2.57 posts per month but for a personal blog on a municipal website this seems reasonable.

**Figure 28 – Example of a personal Blog (Mayor Job Cohen; Amsterdam)**

μFORUM

A forum is an online discussion website, which can be open or closed to the general public, where users can either posts new topics for discussion or reply to other people’s posts (see Figure 29). 5 of the 17 municipalities make use of a forum. The average number of threads and posts number 16.88 and 40.29 respectively, although these numbers are slightly distorted due to the character of the forums in use.

This character is defined by a lack of sophistication in the forum applications in use by municipalities. Standard forums across the web allow users to create elaborate profiles and contain a far more complex content management system. The forums which were seen on a few municipal website were almost simple bulletin boards in comparison, often with posts shown in a list with reactions underneath. The average response is thus 0.83 reactions per thread. These numbers are not high in comparison to large scale forums on the internet but for a municipal forum these also seem reasonable; especially since they still have room to grow.
Webcast

Webcasting is a media form which broadcasts (streams) audio and/or video online, see Figure 62. These streams can be live through a video feed or downloaded by users. Two main types were found during research: as a news/communication tool and broadcasting council meetings online. The most common form of webcasts shown is of council meetings, which are almost always shown live. 14 municipalities make use of webcasting, although only 4 of these have other forms of webcasting such as a weekly TV news show or informational videos about the municipality.

Social Networks

The three chosen social networks are LinkedIn, Facebook, and Hyves. These are the three most popular networks in the Netherlands (Hyped.nl, 2009). Despite all of the Web 2.0 hype that is increasing the popularity of social networks, this is not at all the case when it comes to social networks connecting municipalities to citizens. Unlike Twitter where information can simply be one-directional, social networks require interaction. The extra effort required is likely the reason why only 1 poorly
implemented (as of yet) Facebook page exists and only 1 relatively active Hyves page which is open to citizens. In counterpoint, 12 municipalities have a LinkedIn page for employees, 10 have a Hyves page for employees and 1 has a Facebook page for employees. This shows that while they are ready to apply social networking to their own organization, they do not feel ready to communicate with citizens in this way. The only really good example of an active social network is the Almere Hyves which has 1900 followers, 0.67 blog posts per month, 8 scrap messages per month, and is also linked on the municipal website (see Figure 31).

![Gemeente Almere](image)

**Figure 31 – Example of municipal Hyves (Almere)**

**Twitter**

Twitter is a free micro blogging service that allows its users to send and read short messages called tweets, see Figure 32. 12 municipalities have a municipal twitter account with an average of 412 followers and 29.31 tweets per month. Although no formal research was done, the content of these tweets were generally news items sent through from the website. It did not seem like any interaction was taking place. It was also not always easy to find these municipal twitter accounts due to a large range of account names, instead of simply "Municipality X". While this is not a large obstacle, it is made worse by the fact that 9 of these 12 municipalities did not provide links to these twitter accounts from their municipal websites.

![Gemeente Utrecht](image)

**Figure 32 – Example of municipal Twitter (Utrecht)**

**Media Community**

The two media forms categorized as media communities are Flickr and Youtube, see Figure 33. These are also considered social network sites but as they are focused only on media content they have been placed in a separate category. On the photo-side, Flickr was found to have 5 municipalities making use of this website. Activity seems sporadic, but the average number of photos per month is 10.72. As with the
Twitter accounts, it was not always easy to find the pages which were hosted by the municipality itself; only 1 of these 5 municipalities posted a link to Flickr on their website however. The video-side via YouTube is much more popular. 11 municipalities have a YouTube channel with an average of 25.24 uploads, 631.41 channel views (35.69 per resident), 12672.59 total upload views (512.51 per resident), but only an average of 6.24 subscribers. This last statistic would seem to indicate that, despite the huge amount of visitors, not very many are willing to receive constant updates. These numbers are also likely due to the occurrence of the municipal elections around the time of the research. Here as well, only 1 municipality decided to post a link on their website advertising their YouTube channel.

![Figure 33 – Examples of Flickr (left)(Breda) and Youtube (right)(Zoetermeer)](image)

Chat

Chatting is an online media form where users can send each other text messages in a live environment or through an application such as MSN Messenger. Such chat sessions can be many-to-many or a one-on-one conversation. It is most useful for connecting people who are long distances apart but wish to converse live. There are two main types of chat which were found on municipal websites: the first being a one-on-one chat function with the municipal organization and the second being a chat session with a municipal official. The first is generally meant for client service purposes but this was accepted because information requests or other questions can be related to eParticipation and is thus relevant. The second type is more important for eParticipation as citizens can speak directly with an official about a particular theme and share ideas, see Figure 34. There are 3 examples of chat functions among the 17 municipalities. 2 of these were connected to the municipal service desk and are thus not focused on eParticipation per se but could be used for such. The one chat form which connected citizens and officials was in Houten where one of the aldermen hosted weekly chat sessions via Microsoft Messenger about relevant themes.

![Figure 34 – Example of a Chat service (Houten)](image)
Interactive Map

An interactive map is an application where information such as notices (bekendmakingen) and landmarks are shown on a digital map of an area. Users can interact in some form with these maps, such as placing their own items, reacting to others, or selecting different types of information to view.

Also included in this media form is the website www.verbeterdebuurt.nl, see Figure 35, which is an increasingly popular website where users can post problems and ideas on a map; these are then sent through to participating municipalities.

![Interactive Map Example](image)

Figure 35 – Example of an interactive map (verbeterdebuurt.nl)

This media form also has two aspects for indicators. The first aspect is the use of interactive maps on their own website, where 14 municipalities make use of them. 13 of these make use of maps to send information, often for announcements (“bekendmakingen”), a digital city guide, or a more complex geographical information system. Only Amersfoort used the help of citizens to identify historical sites through a digital map. The second aspect was the use of the external verbeterdebuurt website, as recommended by 2 interviewed experts. 9 municipalities were signed in to receive new ideas and problems from citizens through the website. The average total score here is 25%, referring to the percentage of solved problems and implemented ideas. While this is generally low, the website is still in beta form and growing. Not all problems or ideas are feasible either, so scores in general will be lower than initially expected. None of these municipalities placed a link on their website to verbeterdebuurt.nl.

6.1.1.3 Experimental Media Forms

Simulation / Game

Simulation and games are often used to entertain and/or educate the players. They are a fun way to interact and absorb content, which makes them especially interesting to attract younger users. Only 1 municipality made use of games on their website. Zoetermeer has 3 educational games in their recreation section on the website. While interesting and educational, they do not involve interaction/discussion between players nor are they useful for forming new policy.
ePetition

Since no municipalities have set this up for themselves, this media form was tested using an external website called petities.nl (see Figure 37). This is a new website that is growing in popularity where citizens can create petitions and “sign” them. 3 municipalities have already signed up (among other institutions) to create their own section where they can receive all municipal petitions. The average number of signatures is 360 signatures, which seems relatively higher than an offline municipal petition could gain, with far less effort. Only 1 of these 3 did not have a link on their website, but this is most likely due to the fact that they had only recently signed up.
**Wiki**

The most notable outcome here is that no municipalities make use of wikis with their citizens. An expert and case interview (Appendix C – Interview Notes) did reveal that two municipalities at least were experimenting with a wiki for a project and this would seem the first likely steps that municipalities will take before they even consider collaboration with citizens. It is also possible that due to the nature of the municipal website that a wiki is not appropriate for use there or perhaps only if project pages are integrated into the main website.

**Virtual World**

Virtual worlds are digitally rendered representations of their real-world counterparts or even a fictional world where users can walk around and interact. From a public management perspective they are often used as information tools about an area or to visualize new spatial planning projects before they are built. A small selection of municipalities has started making use of virtual worlds to create digital city guides, see Figure 38.

3 municipalities make use of a virtual world on their website. All of them were produced by the same developer (including another municipality which was not part of the measurements) and are of a type where there is not only information to be seen but interaction is also possible. The actual activity with regard to how many people were using the virtual world was not available for measurement within the constraints of the research project. While they did not seem very active during the periods of measurement, data from the application developer would be necessary to gain accurate measurements. This is will be elaborated upon in the reflection section.
**Participatory Budget**

A participatory budget is a system where the municipality decides with its constituents what will happen with either the entire budget or some part of it. This concept was made famous in Brazil, where towns partake in a complex process of communal decision-making and voting with regard to the budget. In the Netherlands, a similar concept is found in municipalities and is often referred to as a district budget (wijkbudget) or livability budget (leefbaarheidsbudget), see Figure 39.

![Goedidee indienen](image)

*De gemeente Groningen wil zoveel mogelijk goede ideeën van wijkbewoners ondersteunen. Elk idee moet daarom voldoen aan een aantal voorwaarden. Door het beantwoorden van 3 vragen komt u bij het aanmeldingsformulier. Na invulling van dit formulier drukt u op de knop ‘verzenden’.*

IW wil een goed idee indienen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wij raden u dan ook aan om onderstaande vragen in het formulier voor te bereiden.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Omschrijving idee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimaal 9 namen van mensen uit de buurt die uw idee ondersteunen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schatting van de kosten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globale begroting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waarom uw idee bijdraagt aan de leefbaarheid van uw wijk.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 39 – Example of a participatory budget (Groningen)**

6 municipalities had online sections on their website devoted to citizen initiatives for new projects. Most of these were very simple web pages with either contact information or perhaps a downloadable form. 2 municipalities presented a more step-by-step procedure for these initiatives. None of these municipalities presented the possibility for discussion between citizens about these initiatives.

**Chatbot**

A chatbot is a program designed to simulate intelligent conversation (see Figure 40). They are often employed as online help or customer service as conversational agent. They provide a more personal touch and make the user feel more comfortable. Much like the chat function, it is geared more towards eGovernment customer service type goals, but it is included because the chatbot may provide information or another service which is linked to eParticipation.

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Only Almere makes use of a chatbot. It is initially meant as a more service-oriented application, but the quality on either front is not very high as “Ally” does not seem helpful for a large range of questions. The application for eParticipation is informational, and as such is very limited in comparison with all the other media forms with that purpose (newsletter, blogs, etc.). Unless a lot of time and money is invested in a high quality chatbot, the usefulness for the municipality in general will be low. This will not be a feasible investment for any but the largest municipalities, unless a shared service concept is implemented.

**Group Support Systems**

A group support system is an electronic meeting system which is used for collaborative meetings and group work. The example shown in Figure 41 is set in an office space, but it could just as easily be hosted on the internet with users sitting in from different places.
This represents another collaborative application, of which there are no examples to be found on any of 17 municipal websites. Several of the municipal case studies did indicate that they were sometimes used in municipal projects with employees, but did not indicate that these would be used in the future with citizens. As with the wiki, it is very possible that this type of application is simply not appropriate for the main municipal website and is only useful on a project basis.

### 6.1.1.4 Additional Measurements

![Figure 42 – The number of municipalities with each media form](image)

Taking a look at the most commonly used media forms (see Figure 42), it would seem that municipalities most often choose the more easily implementable and/or visually-oriented forms.

**ICT Support**

With regard to the types of available information (all scores here are of a total possible 4 points):

- 16 municipalities provided profiles of their mayor and aldermen with an average rating of 2.47. Most profiles provided a limited description, contact information, and their secondary functions (nevenfuncties).
- 15 municipalities provided information on their council meetings, most often through the form of webcasting with archives of older meetings.
- 3 municipalities provided information on voting behavior within the council.
- 15 municipalities provided a privacy statement with an average rating of 2. Most descriptions were very short and/or included within the disclaimer/proclaimer.
- 15 municipalities provided a disclaimer or proclaimer. The average rating here was 2.82 with more municipalities making use of proclaimers instead of disclaimers. The difference between the two is that the proclaimer indicates what the website will do for the citizen instead of being defensive in the form of a disclaimer.
- 16 municipalities provided information on citizen initiatives and participation with an average rating of 2.29. This was mostly due to the fact that mostly traditional forms were advertised such as participating in a council meeting or sending in an email.
In terms of accessibility the average score for following web standards was 37.06 of a total 47 points and only 3 municipalities were certified by a government institution (drempelvrij.nl).

6.1.2 The Municipal Scores
This sub-section focuses on four different scores: ICT facilitation, the participation ladder, the technographics roles, and the policy cycle. As a general note, the maximum score is 100% although charts do not always reach this high; this is in order to be able to optimally compare the different municipalities.

6.1.2.1 ICT Facilitation
The first notable result is the fact that the overall scores do not exceed 40% with Almere also being the likely candidate for top score if all municipalities would be tested (see Figure 43). The average score is 21.9%. This is most likely due to two main reasons: the infancy of eParticipation on a municipal level and the very broad range of media forms which were tested. A secondary reason is that it is based on a subjective scoring system (for information see Appendix B – Description of the eParticipation Measurement Tool).

The second result is that the smaller municipalities of Renswoude, Texel, and Reeuwijk also have the lowest scores. With the exception of three semi-outliers, there seems to be a possible correlation between ICT score and municipality size. This pattern is shown for the 17 municipalities below in Figure 44 which relates ICT scores to the number of residents per municipality. This is most likely due to the need for sufficient resources and knowledge to supplement the desire for eParticipation. It would be interesting to
observe if this pattern would hold if all municipalities were to be measured. Especially in connection to
the fact that during several interviews (see Appendix C – Interview Notes), it was noted that the existence
of a pattern for large, middle, and smaller municipalities would be likely.

![Figure 44 – The ICT Scores compared to the number of residents](image)

The ICT scores were also measured by media type: standard, innovative, and experimental. With a couple
exceptions (Amsterdam, Den Haag), the standard scores are generally the highest of the 3 types with
scores reaching beyond 55% but with an average of 34%. The second most common types of media are
the innovative ones with an average score of 21%. All municipalities have at least some examples of
standard and innovative media forms, but not all of them also have experimental forms. The average score
here is 6% with 7 municipalities not having any examples at all. Since most of these municipalities are
forerunners with regard to eParticipation it would be expected that most other municipalities would have
even lower scores. The expected pattern between standard, innovative, and experimental media forms
would most likely be consistent.
The extra aspect of the measurement tool, ICT Support, is presented in the figure below. The scores here are generally higher than the others since it is mostly informational in nature, which is something that municipalities are already focused on from a transparency perspective. The average score here is 54%.
While the overall scores for the standard media forms are higher than the other types, the figure above shows that there is a large range in how many forms that municipalities make use of. A few municipalities have 2 forms, while Texel for example only makes use of email. So while these types are generally well-known and not very complex in terms of implementation, these municipalities do not all see the usefulness of all these media forms. It is also notable that even though many of these media forms are available they do not all score high in terms of quality and/or activity. These same patterns can also be found in the innovative media forms shown below in Figure 48.

As described in the previous section, the number of experimental examples to be found is few (Figure 49). In contrast to the standard and innovative media forms, experimental forms often need a lot of time and money involved in order to implement them. As a result, not many municipalities will be capable of implementing such media forms. The average scores are relatively low as a result. One notable exception to the rule above is the ePetition element, which as described in the previous section, is hosted externally.
on an easy-to-use website where municipalities only need to sign up and have a contact person ready in order to make use of this service. This is the likely reason why the municipalities who make use of this also score high.

![Figure 49 – Individual Scores Experimental Media Forms](image)

### 6.1.2.2 Participation ladder

The participation ladder was used to connect the media forms and the types of participation which exist. For a full description of this part of the measurement tool and the full set of scores, see Appendix B – Description of the eParticipation Measurement Tool. The data in the figure used here (Figure 50) and with subsequent aspects will be chosen so as to reflect the most interesting outcomes.

![Figure 50 – Spider graph of selected participation ladder scores](image)
The first interesting pattern here is the general focus on the Informing and Consulting forms of participation (the low end of the ladder). On the user activity side this is also expected as the lower the level of engagement is, the more users will participate (Traunmüller, et al., 2009). So while Almere has the highest overall score, they score lower than Utrecht for example in other areas than Informing simply due to their choice of media forms. On the other side of the spectrum, while Renswoude has one of the lowest scores overall, it does score higher than others on Advising due to the presence of a relatively active forum on their website. Also visible here is that there is a lot less focus on the higher levels of the participation ladder; this is shown more clearly in the bar graph below. What is also of interest in this graph is that the use of Co-production oriented media forms is less than those on the Co-deciding level, which is not expected. This aspect was also remarked upon during the expert interviews (Appendix C – Interview Notes). Haverkamp also commented on this aspect of his research results (Haverkamp, 2007). From his research perspective he noted that co-production necessitates more openness from the municipality and gives citizens more room for influence. This calls into doubt the current format of the participation ladder.

![Bar graph of selected participation ladder scores](image)

**Figure 51 – Bar graph of selected participation ladder scores**

### 6.1.2.3 Social Technographic Roles

Although the scores are generally low, the results of this aspect indicate what the general focus of each municipality on the types of roles they wish to fulfill (for more information see Appendix B – Description of the eParticipation Measurement Tool). Due to the limited amount of media forms which are coupled to role of Collector and the abundance in the use of RSS feeds and Twitter, the scores are focused on this role in the graph below.
The Collector role is useful to note and fulfill from the perspective of meeting modern expectations about websites; something which the expert interviews brought to light as one of the reasons for utilizing eParticipatory media forms (Appendix C – Interview Notes). It is however not a very deeply participatory role in and of itself, so to better analyze the outcomes this role will be taken out for now. The new graph is shown in the figure below.
Figure 53 – Spider graph of selected social technographic scores

Much like the participation ladder, the Spectator role (as compared to informing) scores relatively high, but so does the Joiner role. Tilburg for example, while fourth on the overall scores list, shows a definite focus on Joiner type media forms: Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, virtual worlds. While in contrast, Groningen shows almost no activity in the Joiner role although it is only one position below Tilburg in overall score. After these two roles come the Critic role with slightly less activity and the Creator role with much less activity. These are comparable to the Advising, Coproducing, and Co-deciding participation forms in that they require much more effort on the part of the municipality and as such will not be as easy to implement. This downward trend is more visible in the bar graph below.
The level of activity within these roles loosely corresponds with previous research from Burger@Overheid on the common activities of citizens on eParticipatory websites. These are shown in the figure below.

6.1.2.4 Policy Cycle

The last aspect of the measurement tool is the connection between the participation forms and the policy cycle by identifying which forms of participation are most useful during all the phases of the policy cycle. The assumption here is that certain forms of participation are more or less relevant during certain phase of the cycle; informing for example is especially useful during Agenda-setting, while Coproducing or Co-
deciding is not relevant at all during the Monitoring phase. A complex description of this aspect can be found in Appendix B – Description of the eParticipation Measurement Tool.

![Figure 56 – Spider graph of selected policy cycle scores](image)

The pattern here focuses on Monitoring and Agenda-setting. This is very likely because of the large role that Consultation and Informing play in these phases and which were the most common forms of participation. The lesser focus on Implementation is expected as there are very little participation forms where citizens are capable of contributing in this phase. One notable example here though, is SMS Kruiskamp of the municipality of Amersfoort where citizens send SMS messages about problems in the neighborhood. This could be considered a form of Co-production as citizens are helping the municipality with the execution of a process (enforcing public order). It is also interesting that the pattern is rather more consistent than in the previous aspects. It is unclear whether this is a result of the measurement tool itself or if the focus is indeed so consistent.

### 6.2 Case Study Outcomes

In this section the case study outcomes will be analyzed; these outcomes will partially build on those outcomes of the measurement tools which interviewees reflected upon, but also on the additional organizational aspects which were discussed. Most of the interviewees were from the Communication department but not all; for this reason not all interviewees were in the right position to be able to answer certain questions, these aspects will thus not always be complete from all case perspectives. The sources for all the statements and outcomes in this section are from the case study interviews, the notes of which can be found in Appendix C – Interview Notes.

#### 6.2.1 Municipal Characteristics

The municipalities are listed in chronological interview order. Some relevant facts are listed below about each municipality; these facts will be reflected upon during the discussion of the outcomes as potential causal factors for different eParticipation aspects.
Dordrecht
- Scored below average on the measurement tool: 18.3%
- Large municipality (118,000 residents)
- Standard pattern of citizen ages (e.g. 27% over 55)
- Organized into neighborhoods ("wijken")
- Municipal development is bottom-up (neighborhood-based / "wijkgericht")
- Very active in citizen participation
- Several experiments in citizen initiatives
- Limited range of media for participation
- Interviewed a senior communication advisor.

Eindhoven
- Scored slightly below average on the measurement tool: 21.1%
- Largest municipality of the group (212,000 residents)
- Standard pattern of citizen ages (e.g. 27% over 55)
- Organized into districts ("stadsdelen") and neighborhoods ("wijken")
- Co-creation experiment for citizens to choose the favored method of participation
- Active in citizen participation, but limited range of media available
- Participation in Groene Golf Brigade, project of the Ministry of Interior Affairs to assist in the implementation of Web 2.0 media for eParticipation
- Interviewed a staff member involved with interactive policy-formation.

Breda
- Scored above average on the measurement tool: 23.5%
- Large municipality (172,000 residents)
- Standard pattern of citizen ages (e.g. 27% over 55)
- Organized into neighborhoods ("wijken")
- Very active in citizen participation
- Active alderman in social media
- Large experiments in social media (Breda Morgen)
- Interviewed a senior communication advisor and a communication advisor.

Almere
- The highest score on the measurement tool: 36.8%
- Large municipality (186,000 residents)
- Relatively younger population (e.g. 26% under 18, 23% between 18 and 34, 17% over 55)
- Organized into districts ("stadsdelen") and neighborhoods ("wijken")
- Very active in citizen participation
- Large investment in social media and innovative participatory applications
- Active support from Mayor who maintains a personal blog
- Interviewed a regional manager for the district of Almere Buiten.
Amersfoort

- Third highest score on the measurement tool: 28.1%
- Large municipality (143,000 residents)
- Relatively younger population (e.g. 24% under 18, 22% between 18 and 34, 22% over 55)
- Organized into neighborhoods (“wijken”)
- Very active in citizen participation (mostly offline relative to eParticipation)
- Invested in multiple experiments
- Interviewed the two Heads of the Communication for the sector Welfare, Social Security and Education and the sector Urban Development and Management.

Reeuwijk

- The lowest score on the measurement tool: 7.4%
- Small municipality (13,000 residents)
- Relatively older population (e.g. 31% over 55)
- Organized into districts (“stadsdelen”)
- Spread over relatively large area
- Active in citizen participation, but very little online
- Interviewed the Managing Director and the Head of Communication.

6.2.2 eParticipation as a Concept

All of the municipalities which were interviewed expressed a great interest in eParticipation. The five larger municipalities were also already in a stage at which they are actively experimenting with eParticipation. Reeuwijk in contrast, also in combination with a pending integration with another municipality, is still defining eParticipation for themselves and what they wish to do with it.

Most of the municipalities agree that eParticipation can be useful in complementing offline citizen participation. It extends the range of insight into interests of citizens. It is important here to communicate properly about what forms of participation are being used within a project; this helps to manage expectations. All of the municipalities indicated that they wished to exploit the most useful aspects of eParticipation to the extent which is feasible in terms of resources and effectiveness. One of the other reasons given for making use of eParticipation outside of the added value for projects and citizen participation is that there is a continual movement in the expectations of citizens and website users. Municipalities need to innovate to fulfill the expectations of modern citizens, and thus includes making use of new social media on the municipal website. This is a concept which was also underlined during the expert interviews.

During the interviews some positive and negative aspects of eParticipation were discussed. One positive aspect which was named was the equality of each vote or voice; there is less opportunity for people to crowd out other opinions. eParticipation is also relatively quick and flexible in terms of time and place; holding frequent town meetings can cost a lot of time and logistical effort whereas an online poll or discussion can be put online and the input is the responsibility of each participating individual. The flexibility is also useful; it can be as simple as polling or as complex as a discussion forum. On the other side however, online participation can be somewhat shallow; offline participation allows a bit more time and attention to be given to the content. Polls for example are also difficult to select for representativity and forums can sometimes be difficult to control (it often requires intensive moderation). There are also certain requirements for eParticipation, municipalities must be open for input and take all opinions
seriously. It should also be seen as a tool and not goal in and of itself; which a few municipalities indicated was a danger as “more” participation is not necessarily better. It is also necessary as a municipality to provide structure for citizens, but not too much; as Reeuwijk pointed out: if you approach citizens with an open question for new ideas or strategies then they will ask for boundaries, but if you come with your own plan and ask for input they will ask why their opinion matters if the plan is already there. A balance must be created in when and how citizens (e)participate; a set of best practices would help to create a better process design (European Commission, 2007; Bruijn, et al., 2003). This supports the use of the policy cycle within the measurement tool to indicate how the municipality is currently structured.

One of the topics discussed was whether these municipalities perceived a gap between municipalities and citizens. The response was a general acceptance that a gap exists but that it will always exist to a certain extent. From a political standpoint, politicians often make the statement that this gap should be closed (Andeweg, et al., 2006), but this is not completely feasible. If people are simply not interested in participating, then although they can be lightly encouraged, they should not be forced to. This is not the role of the government; citizens have a personal responsibility to uphold. The government should help facilitate and make sure there is sufficient information available which is open and transparent. Amersfoort indicated (from recent research) that a large part of this gap is because the average citizen finds it difficult or uninteresting to think from a perspective of public values. This is also a reason why (e)participation on a local level works better as citizens are quicker to understand the personal interests or problems in such situations.

The type of decentralized grouping within the municipality also seems to have a large effect on how eParticipation is implemented. Almere specified that it was characteristic for the municipality to have large projects which affected the municipality on a general level, a district level and a neighborhood level. This affects the choice for different types of participation, based on the amount of resources and effort needed for larger scale projects, and it is thus often easier to apply citizen (e)participation on a neighborhood level. On the other hand, Amersfoort felt that on a neighborhood level that collaboration and social cohesion was more applicable and thus offline participation and face-to-face contact would be more useful. So although eParticipation could play a role here, it is possible that it could have a greater role on higher levels in the municipality.

One common issue among the municipalities is the perception among many officials that too many ideas are coming in and there is an overload of opinions which need to be dealt with. This can manifest itself sometimes where officials are only looking for problems with new ideas or reasons why it cannot or should not be done. Municipal officials often feel they are the experts with regard to what can or cannot be done, so why do citizens need to be involved? Reeuwijk indicated that this perception is simply untrue; partially because citizens are experts as well in their respective fields and jobs, but also because there is always a role for the municipality as facilitator. Their opinion is that municipalities need to let go of the strings a bit and be more flexible. Dordrecht and Breda indicated that a more solution-oriented approach would help alleviate some of the issues. Almere also indicated that a different strategy with regards to process management could increase support for the project among involved citizens.

Another major tension within municipalities is the role that participation should have from a democratic perspective. One side says that the city council and aldermen are democratically chosen by the people; they are thus empowered to make decisions for the community and the role of the citizen is thus
restricted. The other side says that while this may be true, the creativity and input from citizens is always useful to represent the will of the people and add value to the projects and processes of the municipality. With the new integration between Reeuwijk and Bodegraven this discussion is now taking place for example, but this seems to be an underlying theme within all the municipalities.

6.2.3 Organizational Aspects within eParticipation
This sub-section describes the responses with regard to the 5 organizational themes (as developed from the evaluation of previous benchmarks and frameworks and described in section 4.3.2) given as open questions during the interviews.

1. The level of awareness, knowledge, and information about eParticipation
Most municipalities indicated that the level of awareness and knowledge among employees is not always high but is still growing. The biggest increase in awareness has come because of the many experiments of the larger municipalities. The success of these projects, such as Burgers aan Zet! In Dordrecht, has given eParticipation a more positive image. The practical implications of this awareness are more spread out however, some municipalities have set up workgroups for Web 2.0 and eParticipation; they are also often active on government social networks and discussing related themes. Others are still unsure about how this awareness and knowledge can be translated into practical strategies and organizational arrangements. The online forms of participation sometimes have a lesser priority; the use of offline participation is also evolving and that is often given more attention.

2. The level of training available for employees
Training plays an important part is transferring theoretical knowledge into personal wisdom. The usefulness was acknowledged by most municipalities, but was not always fully implemented yet. There were either plans for training being made or workshops available which had not been implemented yet, but no one yet had consistent and formalized training for eParticipation. What a few of the municipalities already had done with regards to training were introductory workshops in Web 2.0 and citizen participation in general. Eindhoven is a part of the Groene Golf Brigade of the Ministry of Interior Affairs which will provide it with Master classes in social media. This is indication that support for this aspect is also being recognized from the central government.

3. The level of communication, feedback, and evaluation with citizens
Most municipalities indicate that their levels of communication and feedback were good; this was mostly done in the form of clear agreements about what would be done with citizen’s feedback, collecting this feedback in a transparent format, and being used in city council reports. One municipality indicated that this was something specifically improved upon after earlier research indicated that citizens were unhappy with the level of feedback. An interesting result which multiple municipalities remarked upon was that the level of feedback differed depending on the size of the project. With large projects that affected many people there was more attention given to communication, but with smaller projects this was sometimes an issue. This was also sometimes the result of the lack of clarity within the municipality itself about the problem; they were then hesitant to report about the project progress.
4. The level of resources available for (e)Participation

All of the municipalities were generally satisfied with the budget they had within the municipality. Several municipalities like Dordrecht and Breda were planning new investments in their websites, but the general trend here was that the current websites were rather outdated. Another concern with regard to resources was the human component needed for eParticipation. With forum moderation or activity on a social network, extra tasks and time are needed to support this. There was still an all-around uncertainty about how to best manage these new situations.

5. The level of defined objectives, formal agreements/plans, and responsibilities

The results here among municipalities were somewhat split. A few have defined strategies and objectives with regard to eParticipation, while most others have general guidelines and objectives for citizen participation as a whole. The first category has long-standing traditions with regard to participation which have been adapted to include eParticipation and have a positive mindset already embedded throughout the organization, while the second category is still in the phase of defining their own vision and strategy on internet use and social media. These are often supplemented with existing personal or departmental goals for using eParticipation however. Translating these high level objectives into concrete plans and responsibilities is something that all the municipalities indicated they were still struggling with. There are several factors which affect the situation, namely: the bottom-up growth of social media and web use (so perhaps let that dictate the growth of eParticipation), the distribution of offline versus online participation within projects (when to use what and how much), and a lack of practical leadership (while there are sometimes “exemplary” mayors or alderman making use of eParticipation, there are only a couple municipalities with champions in charge of direct policy implementation).

6.2.4 Municipal Roles and Relationships

One of the issues revealed during the expert interviews was the potential tension between the departments of Communication and ICT. This is something that all government officials experience according to both sets of interviews. It manifests itself on a practical level in that certain applications or websites are blocked because of security reasons; several interviewees indicated they could not even watch the YouTube movies at work that they themselves had posted on the municipal YouTube channel. The ICT department understandably wishes to minimize the risk of information leaks or security breaches, but this also has a direct impact on the use of eParticipation and the level of interaction with the citizens through various external social media. It also reveals itself in the design of the website and subsequent investments in new technology. Almost all of the municipalities indicated that the ICT department was an obstacle in implementing new media because the CMS which was chosen was built for security and robustness, and this stands directly opposite the concept of the website as a communication platform. This is however only one of the roles that the municipal website must play as the former requirements are very necessary for the transactional eGovernment services on the website. In contrast Eindhoven and Breda indicated that their ICT departments provided a lot of support in finding solutions.

A second theme which presented itself was the role of the Communication department and the management of information presented through social media and the website. Breda indicated that with their new website, all information would governed by the specific sectors and that Communication would continue in the role of advisor for the council and aldermen. Amersfoort indicated that the role of Communication was also advisory, while Reeuwijk felt that their role was only sometimes advisory. This
is likely to be dictated both by the size of the municipality and the format of municipal organization into departmental sectors and/or districts.

The last interesting tension which presented itself during the interviews was the tension between the political and the administrative (“ambtelijk”) sections of the municipality. Although the municipal officials are actively involved in the execution and management of municipal processes and projects, they are most often kept in the back-office. One municipality indicated that all petitions are sent directly to the city council where it becomes a political issue; municipal officials have no role there. Another aspect is how interactive municipal officials are allowed to be on the website and through external social media; Almere for example has a protocol which forbids officials from responding on forums and other media. Only if the situation is sufficiently dire, are the officials allowed to formally act. This applies as well to other channels like Twitter, and according to one interviewee this issue is the subject of intensive debate within the government. This issue provides an answer to why so few of the municipalities have open social networks or only use other social media only for informing. A political official is always needed at the moment to be the point of contact with the municipality.

6.2.5 Demographic Strategy

The third topic which was discussed was the presence of a demographic strategy: does the municipality implement certain media forms to target a certain demographic? This was done on the basis of a reflection on the Forrester Social Technographics data shown previously in Table 1. This aspect, while related to the Social Technographics element of the measurement tool, is handled here because of its placement in the open interview questions in the case studies.

One trend in the Social Technographics data shows that people in the 55+ age category are only active on a moderate to low level. Many municipalities indicated that within projects there were relatively more 55+ people active than the data would suggest, this was also suggested during some of the expert interviews. One municipality experienced more participation by students and younger people, while older people who participated sometimes had trouble with the website. Generally it seems like while this last example shows a continual potential issue, especially with more complex websites, the participation of older and younger people is also dependent on the context and type of problem which is being discussed. One interviewee also commented that the category of 55+ is a very large category; they would see it more like 4 separate categories: 55 / 65 / 75 / 85, where only the last two or three categories provide serious obstacles for eParticipation. This is also a trend which is still shifting as the newer generations get older. This impacts the use of current and accurate data in the Forrester Social Technographics research; they update their measurements each year. This also impacts the design of the municipal website versus the use of external websites specifically for younger people.

In discussing the strategy for eParticipation there were two main types. One category had no specific target group and wanted to make sure everyone could participate, possibly helping the older categories through website style/accessibility and training, while the other category put more focus on younger citizens. This latter category felt that the current methods are sufficient for the older generations, while the younger citizens were more important to communicate with via eParticipation because they formed the largest percentage of citizens in these municipalities. So while the age-aspect of the social technographics scores was taken out of the measurement tool because the scores showed no significant difference in the connection between ICT media forms and the age categories, this does support the fact that because of the difference in demographics the strategy of municipalities will differ.
6.2.6 Municipal Experiences and Lessons Learned

Most of the conclusions which were revealed by the measurement tool were acknowledged during the case study interviews. One of the interesting results is that many experiments are taking place, often project or neighborhood based, while the main municipal website is being left behind. The municipal website is considered static and informative, and often outdated. The discussion on this topic was focused on how to relate these separate projects and external media forms back to the municipal website. Should the municipal website contain all these elements or should it be more of a portal to other neighborhood or project websites? This was also a discussion point during the expert interviews and is likely to be dependent on several factors. These include the type of organization within the municipality (districts and neighborhoods) but also the culture of municipal development (top-down vs. bottom-up). One element that all municipalities could agree upon was that the lack of links and clarity on the municipal website with regard to external social media use was something which could and should be improved. While front-page presence is highly sought after (and thus difficult to achieve) it should be possible, at the very least, to create one central section for (e)participation.

Another topic which was brought up was the necessity for clear information and strategy to decide what steps and media forms are effective and can meet the objectives that the municipality sets for (e)participation. This includes the role of online vs. offline participation as discussed previously, but also on whether the municipality should create and host everything on the municipal website or seek to participate in networks and websites that others have already created (a topic also discussed during the expert interviews). If communities don’t exist yet, then the municipality can facilitate the creation of one, but it would be more successful (in terms of achieving critical mass, for example) to join existing networks and link through to these external websites from the municipal website. This decision can also be more cost efficient. Due to lack of experience and knowledge, a common mistake is to create a community or other application and simply wait for people to join in. A “build it, and they will come” strategy does not guarantee success; effort and investments must be made in online and offline outreach to get people to participate (Clift, 2003). Participating as a municipality in already well-established external networks can reduce the costs needed for successful eParticipation. This would mean however, that the municipality has even less control over discussions, an aspect which is already difficult for many municipal employees to let go of. It would also likely reduce the scope of eParticipation forms to discussion only (as opposed to co-producing or co-deciding).

6.3 Reflection on Evaluation Feedback

After discussing the measurement tool and the results, the interviewees found the measurement tool useful for the following reasons:

- It is useful to have a good perspective on which municipalities have invested in what media forms and how successful they are.
- It is valuable to see what the overall/average state of eParticipation is.
- It provides information on who to talk to for insight into certain media forms and sharing experiences with each other.
- It is also useful to gain an idea of where the municipality stands; which could be used for internal discussion and strategizing.
- A few municipalities were already in the planning phase for new website investments, they felt the results of the measurements and the advice given was very useful in supporting the decision process (with regard to specific requirements and changes) and confirmed their earlier decision for a new investment.
These responses support the initial purpose of utilizing a measurement tool to ascertain the state of eParticipation in Dutch municipalities. The use of a benchmark as a driver for investments and transformation, as mentioned in section 2.1.4, was present in these instances as well. Additionally, after seeing the explanation of the tool and the data, all the municipalities could identify themselves in the results of the measurement tool. A few interviewees indicated some surprise due to their own perception of the municipal website or their own focus on project-based eParticipation but after analyzing the details they felt it was accurate.

The comments and criticism given also revealed some of the weaknesses however (specific weaknesses in the measurement tool can be found in Appendix B – Description of the eParticipation Measurement Tool). One of the main flaws mentioned is that because it is so broad and open, the measurement tool does not reflect the effectiveness of certain tools (outside of the scoring weights given to each media form) nor does it measure this aspect. This was a conscious demarcation in the research due to time and complexity constraints, yet this remains an aspect for future study and improvement. Related to this, the current measurement tool also assumes that all media forms are complementary; and while this is generally true in the sense that you can have a LinkedIn group, a Facebook page, and a Hyves page all at once, it is not a feasible choice to make because of the higher costs and management effort involved. Many of the municipalities indicated different preferences and dislikes (based on financial reasons, feasibility, previous experiences, etc.) for certain media forms which presented justifiable reasons not to invest in them. Some examples include:

- Polls are sometimes seen as nice gadgets, but not deeply relevant (though others disagree) and so a choice was made for surveys and a discussion forum instead.
- The costs of a chatbot are relatively high, it also needs to work very well in order to be of use; these are also outside the budget range of many municipalities.
- Two municipalities felt that newsletters were not very useful; Breda felt the concept was even outdated since it was not real-time, and could be replaced completely by an RSS feed.

Many of the municipalities indicated that it was rather difficult to distinguish between online and offline participation in the sense that they considered both aspects integral to a project. This is another aspect which forms a weakness within the current measurement tool. Much like the first issue, this was also a conscious demarcation due to time and complexity constraints. eParticipation complements the offline citizen participation methods and is most effective when both are implemented together. The case studies revealed that the ratio of online and offline participation during different types of projects and on different levels of government could be very different.
7 Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

This section wraps up the research thesis by discussing the conclusions, the limitations of the research, and recommendations for future research. These discussions are based on several different aspects: the direct findings of the research, the implications this may have on eParticipation from an academic and practical perspective, and a reflection about research methods.

7.1 Conclusions

This research project began with the objective of developing a measurement tool which can assess the state of eParticipation within Dutch municipalities. This objective is based on the changes which are taking place in society and the current objectives of the government: shifting expectations on website usage, making use of online channels to reach more/different citizens, and improving governmental policy-formation. Many municipalities are experimenting with eParticipation in different ways, but there is a lack of clarity in what the status of these experiments is and the different directions that municipalities are taking. Similar benchmarks and measurements are already available for the eGovernment side (testing the transaction services via website) but not really for eParticipation. The measurement tool is meant to answer this lack of clarity by testing municipal websites on their use of different media forms in order to score them. With further and more widespread application, the results can be useful as a benchmark, but also for an analysis on the trends and tensions which are occurring in Dutch municipalities. This section will cover the conclusions which answer the main research question and related sub-questions.

The main research question is as follows:

**How can the current state of eParticipation be measured within Dutch municipalities?**

The answer to this question can be found in two parts: a larger design aspect and an initial assessment of the current state of eParticipation. The design aspect was implemented using Herder’s Design Cycle (Herder, 1999). From the problem context and an evaluation of previous benchmarks and proposed frameworks, a set of requirements was formulated. These requirements (section 3.3) reflect the desire to analyze eParticipation from different perspectives (ICT facilitation, citizen inclusion, and municipal organization) and use a set of very specific set of indicators per media form (and other aspects) where possible. These requirements were then used to create a design artefact.

7.1.1 Design of a Measurement Tool

The current status of eParticipation within Dutch municipalities is reflected within the 3 main components identified through desk research:

In the ICT Facilitation aspect, a selection of media forms was found and categorized as standard, innovative, or experimental. The participation ladder (informing, consulting, advising, coproducing, and co-deciding) was also used to categorize all the media forms according to the types of participation they best supported. For example, newsletters are very useful for informing but are not good for other forms of participation. These aspects provided results on the patterns and types of participatory strategy that municipalities were facilitating through the choice and quality of their media forms. These results are communicated not only through a score but also through the use of histograms and spider graphs which make municipalities easier to compare.
In the Citizen Inclusion aspect, web behavior in the form of Forrester’s Social Technographics Roles was used to characterize citizens according to the possible roles they fulfill on the website (spectators, joiners, collectors, critics, and creators). These roles are related to age and gender demographics, and while it was not possible to create a useful measurement for these aspects, they were included as an open case study interview question about municipal demographic strategies. The social technographic roles themselves were linked to specific media forms based on their relevance and multiplied by the ICT Facilitation scores. In this way municipalities could see what types of roles they were focused on (and how well) with their choice of media forms. These results were visualized with bar and spider graphs to indicate patterns in different municipalities.

The last aspect is the Municipal Organization. Due to the recommendations of previous researchers (section 3) and the link with policy-formation, the processes relevant for eParticipation were defined as the 5 stages in the policy cycle (agenda-setting, analysis, policy creation, implementation, and monitoring). These are connected to the participation ladder, thereby indicating which types of participation are most relevant during each stage of the policy cycle. These scores were visualized using spider graphs to indicate the existing patterns. Additional factors were defined, and while not transformed into indicators, they were used as part of the case study interviews. These include factors such as the level of awareness, the level of training available, and the level of resources available. Municipalities were also asked to reflect on the roles and relationships between municipal departments, such as the Communication and ICT departments for example.

Before discussing the main results about the status of eParticipation, it is important to note the methods used to test and evaluate the measurement tool. The tool was initially tested using 17 municipal websites and various Excel tools were used to verify the formulae and other functions were correct. The tool was also evaluated by interviewing a range of experts, both within Berenschot and externally. Their expertise ranged from communication to municipal experience to social media. These interviews provided feedback which was used to create an improved measurement tool. Once this was completed, 6 municipalities were chosen from the previous 17 for a case study. These include Dordrecht, Eindhoven, Breda, Almere, Amersfoort, and Reeuwijk. They were chosen mostly for their larger size and active experimentation with (e)participation, while the smaller Reeuwijk served as a contrast having just started defining the role of eParticipation in the municipality.

### 7.1.2 Status of eParticipation in Dutch Municipalities

The initial assessment of the status of eParticipation comes in two forms: the outcomes of the measurement tool itself based on the data of the website, and the outcomes of the case study interviews.

**Important Measurement Tool Results**

1. The highest scoring municipality was Almere with 36.8% of a possible 100% with an average score of 21.9%.
   
   a. These score levels were expected due to the broad range of tested media forms, but also because the use of eParticipation within municipalities is still in its infancy. Almost every municipality tested had more standard media forms than innovative ones, and more innovative media forms than experimental ones. Within the 17 municipalities there were few examples to be found of experimental media (virtual worlds, simulation/gaming, etc.)
   
   b. The municipalities which were tested seem to have chosen the more easily implementable and/or visually-oriented forms. This is likely due to the need for more resources for many
innovative and experimental types, and this may be the cause of an initial positive correlation between municipality size and the ICT scores.

2. Of the media forms which were used, most are focused on Informing and Consulting, the lowest two levels on the participation ladder. This is likely due to the added effort and resources needed to facilitate deeper interaction, but also because of the underlying uncertainty about effectiveness and obstacles which prevent the municipality from committing to higher forms of eParticipation.

3. This same pattern extends itself to the type of roles which the chosen media forms support; these are namely the Spectator and Joiner roles which require less effort to facilitate for municipalities, while the Critic and Creator roles require the municipality to commit more resources and effort to more complex discussions and interaction. The case study interviews underscored this hesitation for heavy investments at their current stages.

These results show that the status of eParticipation in Dutch municipalities is still quite basic; there are many different types of projects occurring but they are not organized into a functional whole on the municipal website. For example, while the use of Twitter is very popular among the tested municipalities, only a few municipalities link their Twitter accounts on their websites. Most have also chosen to use Twitter as another channel for sending out information, while it has the potential for more. This example is representative for many of the media forms.

Important Case Study Results

The case study municipalities had a positive perception about eParticipation in general, although an abundance of uncertainty exists about the exact role it should play within municipalities. All the municipalities could generally identify themselves with the scores they received through the measurement tool however. Some of the outcomes which came to light during the interviews are likely to be critical aspects in most Dutch municipalities; these outcomes are reiterated below.

1. During the interviews some positive and negative aspects of eParticipation were discussed. One positive aspect which was named was the equality of each vote or voice; there is less opportunity for people to crowd out other opinions. eParticipation is also relatively quick and flexible in terms of time and place; holding frequent town meetings can cost a lot of time and logistical effort whereas an online poll or discussion can be put online and the input is the responsibility of each participating individual. The flexibility is also useful; it can be as simple as polling or as complex as a discussion forum. On the other side however, online participation can be somewhat shallow; offline participation allows a bit more time and attention to be given to the content.

2. The existence of the gap between citizens and government was discussed during the interviews. The response was a general acceptance that a gap exists but that it will always exist to a certain extent. From a political standpoint, politicians often make the statement that this gap should be closed (Andeweg, et al., 2006), but this is not completely feasible. If people are simply not interested in participating, then although they can be lightly encouraged, they should not be forced to.

3. There is plenty of debate about moving from a representative democracy to a more active democracy where citizen participation has a deeper role than simply voting their candidates into office. One side says that the city council and aldermen are democratically chosen by the people; they are thus empowered to make decisions for the community and the role of the citizen is thus restricted. The other side says that while this may be true, the creativity and input from citizens is always useful to represent the will of the people and add value to the projects and processes of the municipality. It is also possible that a compromise will result where the role of eParticipation is limited to certain areas like neighborhood projects.
4. Most of the interviewed municipalities agree that eParticipation is useful in complementing offline participation. It extends the range of insight into interests of citizens, but the uncertainty lies in when to use what. Do the media forms used for eParticipation on the municipal website stand alone or are they connected to municipal projects or both? There is also the possibility to focus only on eParticipation in projects and not use the municipal website at all.

5. The interviewed municipalities are experimenting and have general objectives for eParticipation, but these are often hard to translate into formal plans and responsibilities within the organization. This is reflected in a general lack of formal training strategies. This can also be seen in the possible tension between the Communication and ICT departments, as their objectives for the municipal website can sometimes be at odds (secure website vs. communication platform). Furthermore, the role of municipal administrators in eParticipation is uncertain in an environment where the issues can often quickly become political in nature. The rules are currently very limited for them, yet they are often the most involved members of the municipal organization. Should they be allowed to interact with citizens through social media, and if so, what are the rules?

7.1.3 Implications for eParticipation as a Concept

The results presented above reflect back on the initial issues defined in the problem description. The presence (and/or perception) of a gap between citizens and government has resulted in different attempts to fix this issue (Gunsteren, et al., 1994). One of these is interactive policy-formation, which says that the inclusion of citizens in these processes will improve the quality and support of policies (Arend, 2007), thereby reducing the gap. The role of eParticipation is as a supporting tool for interactive policy-formation. eParticipation presents new (potentially easier and more useful) ways to interact with citizens. Yet, as with the concept of interactive policy-formation before it (Arend, 2007), eParticipation can be used as well as misused based on the actions and mindset of the government.

The results shown above mirror these last two statements clearly. The websites which were tested and the municipalities who were interviewed are using some interesting ideas in their attempt to bridge the gap. Most of the interviewed municipalities have had initial positive experiences with what eParticipation does for them in terms of engaging citizens and creating more successful neighborhood projects. This may have a positive effect on the perception of these citizens and their view on the municipal organization. Indirectly this effect may also improve voter turnout if citizens really feel involved. However, while the government is the main proponent for citizen (e)participation (Gunsteren, et al., 1994), they also seem to form the first obstacle to in-depth implementation. The choice for predominantly simple media forms on municipal websites reveals the hesitance that municipalities have in committing to deeper forms of eParticipation. Where municipalities have chosen media forms which can be used for interaction, they often do not. Particularly the newer hype-ridden media forms like Twitter and YouTube are very popular choices, but are only used to send out information one-way.

Much of this hesitance is understandable. As seen in the case studies, there is a large uncertainty about the effectiveness of different eParticipation options, when and how to use it on the municipal website or within projects, and a lack of skills and resources for process management to deal with new input. The role of civil officials in this interaction is also an issue which must be dealt with for eParticipation to succeed on a larger scale.

The two main reasons for using eParticipation, supporting projects and innovating through the use of social media, present two different potential paths for eParticipation if municipalities can/will not fully commit to citizen participation. On the one hand, there will be communication channels: newsletters, RSS feeds, twitter, YouTube, etc. These will remain purely informational, regardless of how else they can be used. Then on the other hand, there will be the “real” interactive tools: polls, forums, simulation games, and perhaps in the future wiki’s and group decision support systems. These might be hosted on the
municipal website or remain project-based, and will probably focus on polling because this is a relatively low cost investment. If civil officials cannot reply and moderate forums, then these will not be used very much either.

This scenario would seem to fulfill the objective of meeting modern expectations and innovating through social media, while maintaining the illusion of participation through pseudo-eParticipation. The more positive results would likely be found in low level neighborhood-based projects where citizens are polled for their design and solution choices. Perhaps in the end this is the only implementation the government is willing to actually commit to for now. The impact on the gap would be low on a macro level, but perhaps reduced on a neighborhood level.

It is quite possible that as newer generations grow up with social media, with the mindset to go with it, the use of social media will move to deeper interaction. To be clear, this is not to say that there will not be municipalities who are more participative than others, the results from the research of 14 of the larger (and likely more innovative) municipalities do contain media form uses beyond informing and consulting, but the suggested pattern is likely to hold true for most municipalities.

This also has certain implications for the definition of eParticipation. One criticism from the interviewed experts and case studies is that informing is not participation, but it is necessary for it to occur. In measuring the state of eParticipation, this does mean however that the level of informing dictates to some extent the quality of all other participation forms. For this reason, it is useful to still keep it in the participation ladder, but it should be made clear that this is step 0 on the way to “real” participation.

### 7.1.4 Impact on eParticipation Research

The research characterizes itself as an exploratory endeavor; this is reflected in the methods chosen to develop an answer to the research question on how the state of eParticipation should be measured. This represents one of the first attempts to create a functional measurement tool/benchmark specifically for eParticipation outside of an eGovernment context. The working benchmarks which exist currently are primarily focused on the citizen as a client under the heading of eGovernment. Where eParticipation is present, it is limited in scope and depth. A number of researchers (Aichholzer, et al., 2009; Bugter, et al., 2007; Ferguson, 2006; ICELE, 2008; Islam, 2008; Kafentzis, et al., 2009; Loukis, et al., 2008) have worked on several frameworks for creating an eParticipation-focused benchmark. While proposing many useful concepts extending also beyond only the technical, they have neither operationalized indicators for their frameworks nor tested with cases or experiments. The strength of this research is that it moves a step forward by identifying specific eParticipation elements such as the types of media forms and the types of user roles which exist and operationalizes these aspects. While it has not been implemented throughout all municipalities, the measurement tool was tested with 17 municipal websites and 6 more in-depth case studies.

An evaluation of the measurement tool and this research project in general are not without their limitations however. These will be discussed in the following sub-section.

### 7.2 Limitations of this Research

Aside from the content-related outcomes of the measurement tool and the case studies, some effort was given to reflecting upon the limitations of the research method and the tool itself, both in the expert interviews as in the case studies. This section is organized into two sub-sections: the first one discusses the limitations in the research scope and the second one goes into some detail about specific measurement tool limitations.
7.2.1 Limitations in the Research Scope

One of the biggest criticisms which can be made about the measurement tool is that it says nothing about the effectiveness of these media forms on the quality of (e)participation. This is partially due to the fact that the factors involved need to be researched extensively first, but also because it is a somewhat distinctive aspect of eParticipation. A different form of measurement tool would be needed to measure this.

From a benchmarking perspective, as mentioned in section 2.1.4.1, the measurement tool made use of data which was visible to outsiders. Although different aspects were used which were not technical in nature (the participation ladder, the policy cycle, etc.) and the case study interviews contained organizational themes, this presents an only partially achieved design objective. The initial requirement to assess non-technical aspects as well was based on the fact that previous benchmarks often look at technology exclusively, while newer proposed frameworks provided suggestions for moving beyond this. This was accomplished in the measurement tool for the actor roles and the municipal policy cycle, but other demographical aspects and organizational issues were not. There was little data to be found on what constituted good or bad factors. The choice was made to handle these aspects during the case study interviews as open questions. The data gained from the case study interviews (which explored the organizational aspects further) can however, provide a basis for new measurement indicators.

The broad range of media forms chosen is useful in providing an overview of all possible types of implementations. The consequence however, is that the effectiveness and/or feasibility of certain media forms are called into question. This could mean that certain media forms should not be used in the measurement tool (yet). The current measurement tool also assumes that all media forms are complementary. Many of the municipalities indicated different preferences and dislikes for certain media forms (based on investment costs and other aspects) which presented legitimate reasons not to invest in them.

The above-mentioned aspects represent some of the criticisms given by Bannister about the limitations of benchmarking (Bannister, 2007). The goal was to avoid these issues in the new design, yet they are evident in some form nonetheless. The design created within this research project is still a prototype, so further improvements could solve some of these issues. It does make a strong case however for Bannister’s criticisms being a fundamental issue within every benchmark.

While attention is given to the role of the citizen within eParticipation, the focus is still from a supply-side perspective. The needs and desires of citizens with regard to their participation in municipalities was not researched nor utilized within the measurement tool. This is an aspect which requires further in-depth statistical study.

7.2.2 Limitations within the Measurement Tool

There are also some specific limitations centered on the designed measurement tool itself:

1. Matrices were used in the Excel model which tied together several different model aspects, these weights are based on subjective reasoning. While this data was partially evaluated by several other experts, this could be improved upon.

2. In the transformation of the raw data to scores, two weak points exist. Each media form was given a different weight based on its potential usefulness. The levels which were created to determine whether a particular indicator was good or bad are also a subjective assessment. These two aspects need additional evaluation to be sure they are accurate.
3. A requirement was formulated to use nuanced indicators and to avoid binary scores. This goal was met for the most part with a few exceptions. These exceptions occurred because of a lack of data available without requiring significantly extra time and effort in gathering this data from each municipality. This does mean that while the measurement tool is made easier for benchmarking, certain media forms lack depth in their indicators (for specifics see Appendix B – Description of the eParticipation Measurement Tool).

4. As proposed in the design requirements, demographical aspects were used to categorize citizens. The exact implementation was limited in the measurement tool due to the lack of significant results based on gender and age. Other demographical aspects were not used as data was lacking on how the level of education or social status would affect eParticipation.

The limitations mentioned here will be discussed in the following section as the basis for set of recommendations for future research and changes in the measurement tool.

7.3 Recommendations based on this Research
Based on the limitations described above and the specific feedback given during the interviews, the following section will put forward some suggestions for future changes and research. These range from very simple changes to new research directions.

7.3.1 Recommendations for an Improved Measurement Tool
Some smaller proposed changes include:

1. Add a single-sign-on indicator within the ICT Support section. Services like DigID are useful for formally identifying users, this could be integrated with forums and other media forms.
2. Add Picasa as a possible substitute for Flickr, these are the two most competitive communities for photos.
3. Make use of the Motivaction Mentality roles\(^5\) to identify more types of citizens from a lifestyle or political perspective (Motivaction, 2009) instead of just from a user perspective via the Social Technographics. One issue here however, is that the roles are far less straightforward, so a connection within the measurement tool could be difficult. The Motivaction organization itself would need to work together with the researchers to accomplish this.
4. Add a survey to analyze the citizens’ perspective on the municipal website; these could be compared to current patterns and the strategy of the municipality.
5. Create a more extensive research approach for creating the weighted matrices used in the model (more fully described in Appendix B – Description of the eParticipation Measurement Tool); this is crucial for developing an improved model. This also includes the weights given to each type of media for the scoring system.
6. More research needs to be done on which media forms are especially relevant. Given the feedback it might be useful to leave out some media forms, at least until they become relevant (if ever). Examples could include wiki’s, group decision support, and chatbots.
7. Research could also be done to test the effectiveness of different media forms, or at least the perception thereof. This could be done by surveying citizens, municipalities, and experts; a workshop could also support this. These results could be used to create a scoring system.
8. Using the results of the open interview question to form a more direct survey for municipalities; the data can be statistically analyzed and allows a broad range of municipalities to respond. Surveys could

\(^5\) http://www.en.motivaction.nl/106/Segmentation/Key-Insights-Values-%26-Lifestyles/
also be sent to different actors within a municipality (general management, communication, ICT) to analyze the difference in perceptions in greater detail.

9. Use a survey before the interviews to discover what the intended use of each municipality is with regard to the policy cycle: where do you they think they are most focused on and/or what do they want to be focused? Comparing this with the measurement tool results will show the difference in what their current media forms are focused on.

10. In this research project only 17 municipalities were examined once, with several media forms being analyzed for months. It is recommended that the analysis is extended to as many municipalities as possible and measured for at least a year in order to increase the reliability of the results.

11. In a broader test of the measurement tool, measure and compare sets of small, medium, and larger municipalities with each other to test for patterns in eParticipation scores and behavior.

12. Several media forms ideally need better indicators to test for activity. Municipalities and related application developers would be needed to gain a greater amount of information about certain media forms: Newsletters, SMS, Polling, Webcasting, Social networks, Chat, and Virtual Worlds.

7.3.2 Recommendations for New Research

Outside of these smaller changes, which would not drastically alter the format of the current measurement tool, there is also the possibility to move the measurement tool in a different direction. The first possibility would be to combine offline and online participation into a single measurement on the level of citizen participation in municipalities. An entirely different set of measurements and research forms would be required to test the offline aspects however. There are also likely to be aspects which sit on the interface between offline and online participation which would need to be measured, such as the ratio of offline and online participation in different type of projects or the connection between the website and these individual projects.

Another idea, in order to respond to the desire for an indication of effectiveness, is that the selection of media forms could be characterized into different themes based on their use (such as cultural [YouTube/Flickr], social [Hyves] or educational [Games] for example) and assign these media forms different points per theme (based on the research about media effectiveness proposed earlier). Municipalities would score points on these different themes based on their own personal selection of media forms. A municipality would score just as many points if they had a Facebook page or a Hyves page. This would allow municipalities to score differently based on the strategy they have chosen.

Another possible direction for new research would be to focus back on the concept of the gap between citizens and government. A survey or some other method could be used to test citizens about their desires and objectives for (e)participation, how they would like to do this, what their expectations are, etc. This same research could be mirrored within municipalities with the same questions. The comparison between these two data sets would reveal whether there was a gap or not in terms of citizen participation. This would also provide information on what aspects municipalities should be focused on for improvement.

Nevertheless, the current measurement tool is sufficient in providing an indication of the state of eParticipation within Dutch municipalities. Due to the exploratory character of the research, the broad nature of the measurement tool serves to gauge all potentially feasible media forms and provides a basis for further research and a more refined measurement tool.
Reflection on the Graduation Project

As I expect many of my peers will understand, six months for a graduation project is just enough time to understand how much you still do not know about your subject. It is also not enough time to create a perfect and stand-alone model or solution. The objective of my research proposal was to create a complete measurement tool for all sorts of eParticipation aspects and this would be filled in with the help of several municipalities. It became clear during the design phase that this would be impossible to fulfill; it was difficult enough to find experts and municipalities to interview for an hour or two, let alone ask them for what would probably amount to a week’s work at least. This was a bit disappointing as it affected the possible results I could achieve; especially because of the views I developed during my literature research: current benchmarks and measurement tools were sadly lacking in depth and complexity. Something which I believe I made a step forward in, but not as much as I originally would have liked.

In that sense, a month’s time to write a research proposal with the desperation to be accepted by both the university and the external organization you are hoping to intern at, is a clear case of “leap before you look”. Nevertheless, I landed on my feet at Berenschot and was able to forge ahead with my slightly adapted research parameters. I am grateful for the advice I received from all my supervisors; I am glad to have avoided any severe setbacks due to research issues or other delays.

As for the subject of eParticipation, I initially had no clue what it was. During my studies I had learned about eGovernment and I had more extensive courses on process management and policy formation etc. So when I heard about it during my initial interviews at Berenschot with my future supervisor, I thought to myself: what a perfect topic for my study, a technical component which supports a management process. The inclusion of Web 2.0 aspects only made it more interesting, as Web 2.0 is having a large effect on many parts of society. While the exact role of Web 2.0 in the professional world is still finding its place, so too is eParticipation. Some of the reactions I received were deeply critical about the concept: why is it necessary or even useful to have everyone participate in the government? The simple answer is that it’s not; it is almost impossible to even create such a situation. I find it somewhat related to voting in the way that no country will ever have near 100% voting rates without making it a legal issue. Almost everyone votes in Belgium because everyone has to. eParticipation is more like open innovation; private companies are experimenting with co-creation and collaboration communities with their clients and other partners. There it is a creativity and loyalty aspect, but not every (potential) customer will join in. The government supports the public values of society, so it seems logical to me that their clients as citizens can be used to create better solutions to issues which the people support. This is not to say that all projects can be handled this way, as most people cannot think outside of their own small world and the government thus has to support the greater interests of the country as well.

The concept seems to have a deep impact on the perceptions of people about the fundamental principles of our democracy. There is a conflict between the current representative democracy and those that find a more active participation to be more beneficial. This has been going since the time of the Greek democracies. Aristotle discusses different forms of government in his book Politics; a structured democracy with representatives (called a “Polity”) is set against extreme democracy where everyone’s opinion is applied. This last form stood in a bad light as it often turned out to be the wisdom not of the crowd but of the mob. This seems to be the same underlying aspect people are fearful of: I am a public official, I know how the system works, most people are not intelligent objective thinkers, they are not well-informed, so why give them more power to make decisions when I can do it just fine? I can understand this because in many cases it is often true, but that it is why eParticipation is more useful on a low level of government. Citizens make up each municipality, it is where they live and work, and so it
should be a direct reflection of their own desires and needs (as far as it does not violate the general principles of the country). The politics is kept to a minimum on this level and some process management skills can make eParticipation a useful tool. Politicians also often get caught up in the political game, and forget what the will of the people is (if that was even known from the start).

I think eParticipation will continue to exist in one form or another for the long term; this also seemed to be the perspective for the municipalities I interviewed. Whether it continues to develop from simply following the social media hype into deeper participation is another story altogether however, depending on many long-term democratic and political factors. All these tensions have had an effect on what I think the role of eParticipation should be, as there many different ways to implement eParticipation. It can be used as a process management tool during projects, it can be used to create a more structured approach to bottom-up municipal development, and it can be used to have more general discussions about policy or long-term objectives. Each of these options are possible but require different types of media forms and implementations on the internet, they must all be connected or organized to some degree if only for the sake of clarity, and they all demand a different skill set from the municipality. A rise in process management as a skill will be needed to deal with this new type of thinking; it is similar to the tensions between project management (A->B, plan and execute, etc.) and process management (problem perceptions, interests, negotiation, etc.). If this mind and skill set do not adapt then I suspect eParticipation will not mature.

Does this mean I will actively participate in all the projects of my municipality? No, though I suspect I will be more interested in letting my opinion be known if the process is well facilitated. As one interviewee mentioned: we shouldn’t have to force people to join, citizens have their own responsibility. Anyone who wants to participate should be able to, and everyone else should be encouraged (even with incentives) but no further. The quality of the process and the result would likely suffer if participation in the government (outside of voting) was mandatory.

I have learned many things during this graduation project. I am satisfied that the SEPAM course has prepared me for the consultancy world I wish to join, despite the relative obscurity that the study has in that world (people are often either technical or not). I have had a taste of what it is to employ the theory of TBM in my projects and work environment and I look forward to learning more about its practice in the future.
References


Appendix A – Scientific Article

An assessment of the state of eParticipation within Dutch Municipalities: case study results and implications

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ABSTRACT

The European Commission explicitly states in a progress report that with the use of eParticipation there is still doubt about its effectiveness and a danger of populist participation, without always ensuring mature and well-informed debate (European Commission, 2007). The dissatisfaction that citizens feel with regard to the government can be engaged by employing new methods, but to what extent can this be resolved? The concept of the gap has been around in different forms for many decades now and has been a constant subject of attention for politicians (Andeweg, et al., 2006). The use of eParticipation, and citizen participation in general, is based on the assumption that interactive participation of citizens in the processes and projects of the government provides added value to the quality and support of the project, and thus reduces the gap between citizens and government. Previous research in assessing the state of eParticipation within Dutch municipalities provides some results and implications which indicate that if the government wishes to reduce the gap, then they need to go beyond the hype of social media and really facilitate interaction.

Keywords: eParticipation; measurement tool; assessment; municipalities; Netherlands; implications

1. INTRODUCTION

An important element in serving the citizens of any democratic nation is to understand their needs and perceptions about the issues they find important; yet many citizens lack an interest and feel dissatisfied with politics (European Commission, 2007; Stegeman, 2008). Voter turnout and civic participation have been steadily decreasing since the 1960’s (Niemi, et al., 2001) as “the vast majority has opted for passive exit from the political process” (Fraser, et al., 2008). Traditional channels like the newspaper and town hall meetings are decreasing in popularity among citizens, especially younger ones.

The concept of eParticipation is one branch of eGovernment and is defined as the utilization of ICT by citizens to communicate with and influence the government in their policy-formation and decision-making processes. This participation can involve all phases of the policy cycle: from agenda setting and problem formulation to decision-making and evaluation.

The second reason is based on a growing hype occurring within society in the form of social media.

The concept of eParticipation is positioned in the figure below, relative to other popular terms in the field.

![Figure 1 – eParticipation within eGovernment](image)

There are two main underlying reasons why eParticipation is being employed by the government to complement current offline participation methods. The first reason is to use ICT to support the current interactive policy-formation methods which exist in order to improve the quality of the process, but also to increase the representativity and the input from citizens (Central Office of Information, 2009).

Blogs, forums, and social networking websites are among the most popular forms of media in use on the
internet today (Li, et al., 2008). This brings with it a changed perception and expectation about media use, websites, and design.

1.1 Paper Objective
This is not to say that there are no dangers or downsides present; the European Commission explicitly states in a progress report that with the use of eParticipation there is still doubt about its effectiveness and a danger of populist participation, without always ensuring mature and well-informed debate (European Commission, 2007). The objective of this paper is to discuss some of these issues by reflecting on the results of a preliminary assessment on the state of eParticipation within Dutch municipalities.

1.2 Structure
The general structure of the article will be as follows:

- **Section 2** – A problem description about the issues involved with interactive policy-formation and eParticipation.
- **Section 3** – An analysis of the results of previous research with a focus on the underlying themes discussed in section 2. An explanation of the measurement tool which was used to produce these results is given where relevant.
- **Section 4** – A discussion about what these results mean and implicate about the role of eParticipation.
- **Section 5** – A conclusions which presents the main points of the paper.
- **Section 6** – A set of proposed research elements based on the discussion in section 4.

2. Problem Description
There are significant changes occurring in the culture and technology of younger generations, resulting in a gap between citizens and their government. On the one hand political and administrative decision-makers are faced “with low election turn-outs, tight budgets, increasing integration, and decreasing relevance of physical boundaries”, while on the other hand there is “an ever increasing technology-savvy and demanding citizenry” (European Commission, 2007). Van Gunsteren and Andeweg concluded in 1994 that the gap consisted mostly of a new sensitivity of politicians reacting to a richer and better educated population of citizens, and that there was no real increase in the distance between citizens and politicians (Gunsteren, et al., 1994). The issue of the ‘gap’ has not disappeared since then. In new research by Andeweg and Thomassen in 2006 the conclusion has changed slightly; while the causes of the gap seem to change and remain vague, there does seem to be a structural problem present (Andeweg, et al., 2006). According to Dalton, this erosion of public confidence is due to a post-materialistic culture where the quality of life and self-discovery have become more important, while citizens are better educated and have access to more information (Dalton, 2004). Although the level of trust is generally higher in the Netherlands, since 2002 this confidence has also started to decrease, while in 2006 66% of members of Parliament believed that a gap exists (Andeweg, et al., 2006).

eParticipation is the most recent step in empowering citizens to protect their rights and have their voices heard by the government (Evans, et al., 2006). There is a general belief that utilizing eParticipation will help to bridge this gap so that “decision makers serve citizens more effectively” (Evans, et al., 2006) and “build policy support to take effective action and avoid political and social divides” (European Commission, 2007). This belief is built on the premise that interactive policy-formation is effective in closing this gap and producing better and more supported decisions and plans (Arend, 2007; Central Office of Information, 2009). While this is true in a theoretical sense, there are definite obstacles and problems with this in practice. The use of interactive policy-forming opens the process to citizens and gives them more power to contribute; this is an intrusion however in the role of the public official who becomes defensive (despite their acceptance of the presence of the ‘gap’ and its need to be reduced) (Arend, 2007). In order to adapt to this intrusion the role of the government would need to change toward a more facilitating role where process management skills help to accept and use the new input from citizens (Bruijn, et al., 2003). Yet the danger exists that due to the difference in power between the government and individual citizens that strategic behavior will exist which makes misuse of interactive policy-formation: process managers can be partial, the choice of participants can be skewed, and outcomes may not translate into the final policy. The use of interactive policy-formation is more like another tool in the arena of process management than it is a goal in and of itself for the improvement of democracy; it all depends on how government officials, process managers, and other stakeholders (like citizens) make use of it (Arend, 2007). The fact that government entities are moving forward and experimenting with eParticipation indicates a motivation to improve the democratic
process through increased citizen participation, although this does not guarantee success.

The objective to introduce and improve eParticipation is supported by the European Union's (EU) i2010 initiative, which hopes to create “better decision-making processes and greater participation of citizens in all phases of the democratic decision-making process” (European Commission, 2007). These are relatively new priorities as the focus in previous years has been on the spread of ICT infrastructure and broadband connections, providing information to citizens, and transferring offline services into online transaction services (requesting forms, filing taxes, car registration, etc.) in the form of eAdministration. Government entities are generally becoming accustomed to implementing and maintaining these aspects, but the deeper elements of eParticipation are still in their infancy (Albrecht, 2008; European Commission, 2007). Yet it is not sufficient to simply focus on administrative efficiency, as “being citizens of an information society means not only being able to access the services of a more efficient public administration...but also being offered a new way of taking part in public life” (EuroSpace, 2009). Another reason reflects the change in the more educated citizens of today who have access to a great amount of information, as mentioned above. The interactions between people and their sources of information are increasingly found through the internet. Citizens can participate more easily via the internet as it is independent of time and place, while also lowering barriers-to-entry because of its relative anonymity and lack of social pressure (EuroSpace, 2009). The growth of a social network based internet is something that shouldn’t escape the attention of private companies or governments (Li, et al., 2008). The perception of an outdated website (as communication channel and information source) and limited functionality are obstacles in including this new generation of technology-savvy citizens.

In order to explore the empirical data present in the field of eParticipation, a measurement tool was designed to assess the state of eParticipation present within Dutch municipalities. The research characterized itself as an exploratory endeavor; this is reflected in the methods chosen to develop an answer to the research question on how the state of eParticipation should be measured. This represents one of the first attempts to create a functional measurement tool/benchmark specifically for eParticipation outside of an eGovernment context. The working benchmarks which exist currently are primarily focused on the citizen as a client under the heading of eGovernment. Where eParticipation is present, it is limited in scope and depth. A number of researchers (Aichholzer, et al., 2009; Bugter, et al., 2007; Ferguson, 2006; ICELE, 2008; Islam, 2008; Kafentzis, et al., 2009; Loukis, et al., 2008) have worked on several frameworks for creating an eParticipation-focused benchmark. While proposing many useful concepts extending also beyond only the technical, they have neither operationalized indicators for their frameworks nor tested with cases or experiments. The strength of this research from an academic perspective is that it moves a step forward by identifying specific elements such as the types of media forms and the types of user roles which exist and operationalizes these aspects. While it has not been implemented throughout all municipalities, the measurement tool was tested with 17 municipal websites and 6 more in-depth case studies.

The initial results of this tool form the basis for the subsequent analysis below.

3. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

3.1 Measurement Tool Outcomes

The tool was first evaluated by measuring 17 different municipalities. The municipal websites chosen for study were mostly those larger municipalities who are actively experimenting with eParticipation. Nonetheless, smaller municipalities were also chosen to provide a representative contrast. The number of residents of these municipalities ranges from 4,500 to 750,000. The complete list is as follows: Almere, Amsterdam, Den Haag, Renswoude, Texel, Utrecht, Groningen, Delft, Dordrecht, Eindhoven, Breda, Tilburg, Rotterdam, Houten, Zoetermeer, Amersfoort, and Reeuwijk.

3.1.1 ICT Facilitation

The purpose of this measurement tool aspect was to test how well municipalities are facilitating eParticipation on their website through the use of different forms of media. This is shown in both the selection of media forms which are used and how actively these chosen media forms are put to use. Based on the recommendations for specific media forms found within literature (Albrecht, 2008; Ferguson, 2006; Kafentzis, et al., 2009; ICELE, 2008; Stegeman, 2008; Rentinck, et al., 2007; Tambouris, et
al., 2007), the following set was selected for measurement:

**Standard**
- Email / Newsletter / Short Message Service (SMS) / Poll / Survey

**Innovative**
- Real Simple Syndication (RSS) Feed / Blog / Forum / Webcasting / Social Networks (LinkedIn, Facebook, Hyves) / Twitter / Media Community (Flickr, YouTube) / Chat / Interactive Map

**Experimental**
- Simulation or Game / ePetition / Wiki / Virtual World / Participatory Budget / Chatbot / Group Support System
These media forms have been categorized in order to indicate their relative status. Standard forms of media have been around for quite awhile, innovative media contains many Web 2.0 aspects such as social networks and indicates an increasingly popular segment of media, and the experimental media contains elements which are of potential use but are (as of yet) used rarely (Ferguson, 2006).

The first notable result is the fact that the overall scores do not exceed 40%, with Almere also being the likely candidate for top score if all municipalities would be tested (see Figure 2). The average score is 21.9%. This is most likely due to two main reasons: the infancy of eParticipation on a municipal level and the very broad range of media forms which were tested.

The ICT scores were also measured by media type: standard, innovative, and experimental (see Figure 3).

With a couple exceptions (Amsterdam, Den Haag), the standard scores are generally the highest of the 3 types with scores reaching beyond 55% but with an average of 34%. The second most common types of media are the innovative ones with an average score of 21%.

All municipalities have at least some examples of standard and innovative media forms, but not all of them also have experimental forms. The average score here is 6% with 7 municipalities not having any examples at all. Since most of these municipalities are forerunners with regard to eParticipation it would be expected that most other municipalities would have even lower scores. The expected pattern between standard, innovative, and experimental media forms would most likely be consistent.
3.1.2 The Participation Ladder

The participation ladder is a classification of 6 forms of participation: informing, consulting, advising, coproducing, co-deciding, and self-governing. This last concept is not relevant to this research because the focus is on eParticipation through the municipal website, which is a platform for the municipality and the citizen together. The participation ladder is shown in Figure 4.

The participation levels which are used in this research can be defined as follows (Albrecht, 2008; Bannister, F., 2009; Ferguson, 2006; Committee of Ministers, 2009; Parycek, et al., 2009; Post-Dijkstra, et al., 2009):

- Informing – a one-way provision of information about public affairs and the municipal organization. This is often considered a condition of success for other forms of participation (Albrecht, 2008).
- Consulting – expertise, opinions, and/or votes are used to poll for the perspective of the citizen on selected topics. The government is not obliged to act on these perspectives but may use them as a basis for policy. The communication is often between a municipality and citizens individually.
- Advising – this type of participation expands consultation into a group discussion where citizens can deliberate together with the municipality about problems or policy alternatives. The outcomes have a little more weight within the municipal organization, though they can take a different path when it comes time to form policy.
- Coproducing – coproduction is a form of participation where the agenda is set together with the citizens and a new policy or service is created together. The municipality is beholden to the results of the process.
- Co-decision – A type of participation where the municipality asks citizens to make a binding choice about a selection of policy alternatives.

The purpose of using the participation ladder is to relate the media forms which can be used on the website to the types of participation which exist. This is important as organizations can choose what type of participation and democratic forms they wish to follow; it is a strategic choice (e.g. a representative democracy versus a more participative democracy).

The first interesting pattern here (see Figure 5) is the general focus on the Informing and Consulting forms of participation (the low end of the ladder). So while Almere has the highest overall score, they score lower than Utrecht for example in other areas than Informing simply due to their choice of media forms. On the other side of the spectrum, while Renswoude has one of the lowest scores overall, it does score higher than others on Advising due to the presence of a relatively active forum on their website.
Figure 5 – Spider graph of selected participation ladder scores

3.2 Case Study Outcomes

Six of the municipalities tested with the measurement tool were also part of a more in-depth case study which involved interviews mostly with staff from the Communication department. The interviewed municipalities include: Dordrecht, Eindhoven, Breda, Almere, Amersfoort, and Reeuwijk.

3.2.1 eParticipation as a Concept

One of the topics discussed in the case study interviews was whether these municipalities perceived a gap between municipalities and citizens. The response was a general acceptance that a gap exists but that it will always exist to a certain extent. From a political standpoint, politicians often make the statement that this gap should be closed (Andeweg, et al., 2006), but this is not completely feasible. If people are simply not interested in participating, then although they can be lightly encouraged, they should not be forced to. This is not the role of the government; citizens have a personal responsibility to uphold. The government should help facilitate and make sure there is sufficient information available which is open and transparent. Amersfoort indicated (from recent research) that a large part of this gap is because the average citizen finds it difficult or uninteresting to think from a perspective of public values. This is also a reason why (e)participation on a local level works better as citizens are quicker to understand the personal interests or problems in such situations.

One common issue among the municipalities is the perception among many officials that too many ideas are coming in and there is an overload of opinions which need to be dealt with. This can manifest itself sometimes where officials are only looking for problems with new ideas or reasons why it cannot or should not be done. Municipal officials often feel they are the experts with regard to what can or cannot be done, so why do citizens need to be involved? Reeuwijk indicated that this perception is simply untrue; partially because citizens are experts as well in their respective fields and jobs, but also because there is always a role for the municipality as facilitator. Their opinion is that municipalities need to let go of the strings a bit and be more flexible. Dordrecht and Breda indicated that a more solution-oriented approach would help alleviate some of the issues. Almere also indicated that a different strategy with regards to process management could increase support for the project among involved citizens.

Another major tension within municipalities is the role that participation should have from a democratic perspective. One side says that the city council and aldermen are democratically chosen by the people; they are thus empowered to make decisions for the community and the role of the citizen is thus restricted. The other side says that while this may be true, the creativity and input from citizens is always useful to represent the will of the people and add value to the projects and processes of the municipality.

3.2.2 Organizational Aspects within Municipalities

1. The level of awareness, knowledge, and information about eParticipation

Most municipalities indicated that the level of awareness and knowledge is not always high but is still growing. The practical implications of this awareness are more spread out however, some municipalities have set up workgroups for Web 2.0 and eParticipation; they are also often active on government social networks and discussing related themes. Others are still unsure about how this awareness and knowledge can be translated into
practical strategies and organizational arrangements. The online forms of participation sometimes have a lesser priority; the use of offline participation is also evolving and that is often given more attention.

2. The level of training available for employees

Training plays an important part in transferring theoretical knowledge into personal wisdom. The usefulness was acknowledged by most municipalities, but was not always fully implemented yet. There were either plans for training being made or workshops available which had not been implemented yet, but no one yet had consistent and formalized training for eParticipation. What a few of the municipalities already had done with regards to training were introductory workshops in Web 2.0 and citizen participation in general.

3. The level of defined objectives, formal agreements/plans, and responsibilities

The results here among municipalities were somewhat split. A few have defined strategies and objectives with regard to eParticipation, while most others have general guidelines and objectives for citizen participation as a whole. The first category has long-standing traditions with regard to participation which have been adapted to include eParticipation and have a positive mindset already embedded throughout the organization, while the second category is still in the phase of defining their own vision and strategy on internet use and social media. These are often supplemented with existing personal or departmental goals for using eParticipation however. Translating these high level objectives into concrete plans and responsibilities is something that all government officials experience according to both sets of interviews. The ICT department understandably wishes to minimize the risk of information leaks or security breaches, but this also has a direct impact on the use of eParticipation and the level of interaction with the citizens through various external social media. Almost all of the municipalities indicated that the ICT department was an obstacle in implementing new media because the CMS which was chosen was built for security and robustness, and this stands directly opposite the concept of the website as a communication platform. This is however only one of the roles that the municipal website must play as the former requirements are very necessary for the transactional eGovernment services on the website.

3.2.3 Municipal Roles and Relationships

One of the issues revealed during interviews with various experts was the potential tension between the departments of Communication and ICT. This is something that all government officials experience according to both sets of interviews. The ICT department understandably wishes to minimize the risk of information leaks or security breaches, but this also has a direct impact on the use of eParticipation and the level of interaction with the citizens through various external social media. Almost all of the municipalities indicated that the ICT department was an obstacle in implementing new media because the CMS which was chosen was built for security and robustness, and this stands directly opposite the concept of the website as a communication platform. This is however only one of the roles that the municipal website must play as the former requirements are very necessary for the transactional eGovernment services on the website.

The last interesting tension which presented itself during the interviews was the tension between the political and the administrative sections of the municipality. Although the municipal officials are actively involved in the execution and management of municipal processes and projects, they are most often kept in the back-office. One aspect is how interactive municipal officials are allowed to be on the website and through external social media; Almere for example has a protocol which forbids officials from responding on forums and other media. Only if the situation is sufficiently dire, are the officials allowed to formally act. This applies as well to other channels like Twitter, and according to one interviewee this issue is the subject of intensive debate within the government. This issue provides an answer to why so few of the municipalities have open social networks or only use other social media only for informing. A political official is always needed at the moment to be the point of contact with the municipality.

4. DISCUSSION

The results presented in the previous section reflect back on the initial issues defined in the problem description. The presence (and/or perception) of a gap between citizens and government has resulted in different attempts to fix this issue (Gunsteren, et al., 1994). One of these is interactive policy-formation, which says that the inclusion of citizens in these processes will improve the quality and support of policies (Arend, 2007), thereby reducing the gap. The role of eParticipation is as a supporting tool for interactive policy-formation. eParticipation presents new (potentially easier and more useful) ways to
interact with citizens. Yet, as with the concept of interactive policy-formation before it (Arend, 2007), eParticipation can be used as well as misused based on the actions and mindset of the government.

The results shown above mirror these last two statements clearly. The websites which were tested and the municipalities who were interviewed are using some interesting ideas in their attempt to bridge the gap. Most of the interviewed municipalities have had initial positive experiences with what eParticipation does for them in terms of engaging citizens and creating more successful neighborhood projects. This may have a positive effect on the perception of these citizens and their view on the municipal organization. Indirectly this effect may also improve voter turnout if citizens really feel involved. However, while the government is the main proponent for citizen (e)participation (Gunsteren, et al., 1994), they also seem to form the first obstacle to in-depth implementation. The choice for predominantly simple media forms on municipal websites reveals the hesitance that municipalities have in committing to deeper forms of eParticipation. Where municipalities have chosen media forms which can be used for interaction, they often do not. Particularly the newer hype-ridden media forms like Twitter and YouTube are very popular choices, but are only used to send out information one-way.

Much of this hesitance is understandable. As seen in the case studies, there is a large uncertainty about the effectiveness of different eParticipation options, when and how to use it on the municipal website or within projects, and a lack of skills and resources for process management to deal with new input. The role of civil officials in this interaction is also an issue which must be dealt with for eParticipation to succeed on a larger scale.

The two main reasons for using eParticipation, supporting projects and innovating through the use of social media, present two different potential paths for eParticipation if municipalities cannot/will not fully commit to citizen participation. On the one hand, there will be communication channels: newsletters, RSS feeds, twitter, YouTube, etc. These will remain purely informational, regardless of how else they can be used. Then on the other hand, there will be the “real” interactive tools: polls, forums, simulation games, and perhaps in the future wiki’s and group decision support systems. These might be hosted on the municipal website or remain project-based, and will probably stick to polling because this is a relatively low cost investment. If civil officials cannot reply and moderate forums, then these will not be used very much either.

This scenario would seem to fulfill the objective of meeting modern expectations and innovating through social media, while maintaining the illusion of participation through pseudo-eParticipation. The more positive results would likely be found in low level neighborhood-based projects where citizens are polled for their design and solution choices. Perhaps in the end this is the only implementation the government is willing to actually commit to for now. The impact on the gap would be low on a macro level, but perhaps much reduced on a neighborhood level.

It is quite possible that as newer generations grow up with social media, with the mindset to go with it, the use of social media will move to deeper interaction. To be clear, this is not to say that there will not be municipalities who are more participative than others, the results from the research of 14 of the larger (and likely more innovative) municipalities do contain media form uses beyond informing and consulting, but the suggested pattern is likely to hold true for most municipalities.

This also has certain implications for the definition of eParticipation. One criticism from the interviewed experts and case studies is that informing is not participation, but it is necessary for it to occur. In measuring the state of eParticipation, this does mean however that the level of informing dictates to some extent the quality of all other participation forms. For this reason, it is useful to still keep it in the participation ladder, but it should be made clear that this is step 0 on the way to “real” participation.

5. CONCLUSIONS

While there are a large range of experiments taking place in the 17 municipalities measured, these investments seem to be focused largely on informing and consulting. The choice for low cost investments was evident, revealing the hesitation to fully commit to eParticipation. The underlying issues were revealed in 6 municipal case studies which explored some of the organizational factors involved in facilitating eParticipation. The interviewed municipalities had a positive perception about eParticipation in general, although an abundance of uncertainty exists about the exact role it can and should play within municipalities. The reduction of the gap between citizens and government hinges on the resolution of these issues and the commitment
needed by the government to deeper forms of participation.

6. FURTHER RESEARCH

The need for further research is defined by the unresolved issues and uncertainties which have been mentioned in previous sections. The suggestions for further research include the following aspects:

- Research should be done to test the effectiveness of different media forms, or at least the perception thereof. This could be done by surveying citizens, municipalities, and experts; a workshop could also support this.
- Use the results of the case study interviews to form a more direct survey for municipalities; the data can be statistically analyzed and allows a broad range of municipalities to respond. Surveys could also be sent to different actors within a municipality (general management, communication, ICT) to analyze the difference in perceptions in greater detail.
- In the research done, only 17 municipalities were examined once, with several media forms being analyzed for months. It is recommended that the analysis is extended to as many municipalities as possible and measured for at least a year in order to increase the reliability of the results.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to my supervisors and peers for giving advice and feedback during this research. I would like to show my appreciation as well to the consultants, external experts, and the 6 municipalities who offered up their time, experiences, and wisdom for use in my research.

8. REFERENCES


Appendix B – Description of the eParticipation Measurement Tool

ICT Data
This section describes in detail the ICT section of the measurement tool. The purpose of this appendix is to describe the “what” and “how” of the design. No attention will be given here to the purposes of certain design aspects or an analysis of the outcomes; these are presented in the appropriate sections of the main text. Where an indicator is adjusted for the number of municipal residents, the information is based on municipal data from the Central Bureau of Statistics\(^6\). All “type” indicators are notated with a 0-4 scale (e.g. in indicators for blogs, see Table 3), unless otherwise specified.

Standard Media Forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Email</th>
<th>present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response time</td>
<td># days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td>indication of response time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newsletter</th>
<th>present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td>personalized composition # of publications indicated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SMS</th>
<th>present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gov’t-&gt;Citizen</td>
<td>present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen-&gt;Gov’t</td>
<td>present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poll</th>
<th>present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td>results shown possibility to react about poll</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th># of surveys per year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td># of surveys per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>avg. # respondents / residents(\ast 10.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td>results shown formal survey panel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Email

The municipal email service was tested using a fake email address. Each municipality received an email from a Fred Appelsma with the question:

*Do you have an online newsletter which I can subscribe to and how often is it sent out?*

The content of the question was partially based on the fact that it was often not indicated how often a newsletter was sent. The methodology of the email quality indicator is based on previous research done by Gauld et al. on the responsiveness of e-government in Australia and New Zealand (Gauld, et al., 2008). Their method was to ask a simple question with two elements and the score was determined on whether one or both parts were answered. Here the measurement is based on whether a simple website link was given as answer, one part was answered, both parts were answered, or whether the answer was above and beyond what is strictly necessary. This could include extra information on how to find the newsletter or

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other sources of news like an RSS feed or twitter account. A bonus indicator was used to determine whether municipalities indicated how long their response would take.

**Newsletter**

An online newsletter is a service which compiles news items from the website and sends them via email. The newsletter is measured on the basis on its presence or lack thereof, the option to personalize the newsletter based on a choice of themes or other criteria (see Figure 57), and the indication of the number of publications per year. As proposed in the design requirements, the original goal was to avoid simple yes/no indicators as this formed a weakness in other benchmarks. A complete test of this indicator would have made it necessary to subscribe to each newsletter and follow it for at least 6 months or even longer. For this reason it was taken out as an indicator for the newsletter. This is a recommendation for subsequent research.

**SMS (Simple Message Service)**

SMS is a popular mobile application in the Netherlands; it can be used to send short messages to people on their mobile phones. The SMS media format is measured by a test of presence; two types have been identified: SMS services where the municipality sends a message to its citizens and one where citizens can send messages to their municipality (see Figure 58). The lack of a more in depth indicator is related to the situation with the newsletter. To measure activity (messages per time unit), one would have to subscribe to these services for a long period of time. There are also different types of SMS services which make the measurement of messages per time unit less relevant. For example, many municipalities make use of SMS-Alert which only becomes relevant in case of emergencies. A more effective indicator would be recommended for future research, such as the number of subscriptions (the data would need to be available).

**Poll**

Polls are simple surveys where one statement or question is voted on through a set of possible answers. This media format is measured by presence, the ability to view the results, and the possibility to react about the poll. Originally the amount of polls was chosen as an indicator. This information is not often visible however. Subsequent research would require either following the municipal websites to see how often the poll was changed or asking each municipality to contribute data for the measurement tool.
Surveys are a more complex form of statistical research, as opposed to a simple poll. Respondents are given a series of questions about a particular theme. Demographical aspects are often noted in order to provide a context to the subsequent statistical analysis of the data. These often form the basis of more expansive research processes for the municipal council for example. Surveys are measured by how often they are sent out each year, the average number of respondents per resident, whether the results are available for viewing, and whether a formal survey panel has been organized. This is a group of citizens who have signed up to receive all surveys (in Dutch: burger panel). It should be noted that it was in a few rare cases not possible to see how often surveys were done; the lack of transparency in these few cases was also an implicit indicator of the quality.

Innovative Media Forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3 – Innovative media forms with indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RSS Feed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># posts / month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webcast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Social Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th># members / residents*10.000</th>
<th># posts / month</th>
<th>link on municipal website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td># members / residents*10.000</td>
<td># wall posts / month</td>
<td>link on municipal website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyves</td>
<td># members / residents*10.000</td>
<td># messages (blog) / month</td>
<td># scraps / month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># scraps / # members</td>
<td># polls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>link on municipal website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td># members / residents*10.000</td>
<td># tweets / month</td>
<td># following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>link on municipal website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Community</td>
<td>avg. # archive photo’s / month</td>
<td># members / residents*10.000</td>
<td># discussion posts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>avg. # replies / member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>link on municipal website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youtube</td>
<td># uploads</td>
<td># channel views / residents*10.000</td>
<td># tot upload views / residents*10.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># subscribers / residents*10.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>link on municipal website</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Other Platforms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chat</td>
<td>type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive Map</td>
<td>signed up for verbeterdebuurt.nl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>score - problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>score - ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>score - total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>link on municipal website</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RSS (Really Simple Syndication)**

An RSS feed is a simple service which is similar to a newsletter in that it aggregates news items and other messages and allows a user to subscribe to this feed. Users need their own application or browser to download the messages, they can do use the same application for multiple feeds. The indicators are the number of messages per week and a bonus indicator for an explanation of the use of the RSS feed. This is useful because RSS is an upcoming service and requires an external feed reader which needs to be downloaded first.

**Blog**

A web log or “blog” is an online journal or news publication where an individual or group posts regular items for viewing by the public. Generally these users can react and discuss the blog post. Two types of blogs have been identified: a news blog where municipal news items are posted and a personal blog which is published by a municipal official such as the mayor or an alderman, see Figure 60. Both types are measured by the type of blog which is used and the amount of posts per month. The type of blog ranges
from one-way information, a blog where reaction is possible, a blog where the owner replies to reactions that are made, and a blog where citizens can post their own items.

**Mediarumoer**

*Job Cohen | dinsdag 23 december 2008 | 15:11 | Burgemeester Cohen*

Als burgemeester van Amsterdam lees je af en toe over jezelf in de krant. Meestal klopt de informatie maar een enkele keer wordt een opmerking van mij verkeerd geïnterpreteerd of worden mij zelfs woorden in de mond gelegd die ik nooit heb gebruikt. De afgelopen dagen overkwam mij beide.

[+] Lees meer [+] Er zijn 3 reacties op dit item

**Figure 60 – Example of a personal Blog (Job Cohen; Amsterdam)**

**Forum**

A forum is an online discussion website, which can be open or closed to the general public, where users can either posts new topics for discussion or reply to other people’s posts (see Figure 61). Forums are used for everything from technical support to discussing new movies. This media form is measured by counting the number of threads (new topics) there are, the amount of total posts which exist, and the average number of posts per thread. This last indicator is used to test whether or not users are really reacting to new threads which are often created by the municipality themselves. A bonus indicator is the presence of a tutorial and/or rule description for the forum.

A surprising result within this media form was the lack of sophistication in the forum applications in use by municipalities. Standard forums across the web allow users to create elaborate profiles and contain a far more complex content management system. The forums which were seen on a few municipal website were almost simple bulletin boards in comparison, often with posts shown in a list with reactions underneath. As a result of this many of the indicators which should have been useful became irrelevant. For example, originally the amount of moderators, the average posts per moderator, % of total posts, and the new topic to reply ratio was to be measured but these statistics were simply not available. This remains a recommendation for the future however.

**Webcast**

Webcasting is a media form which broadcasts (streams) audio and/or video online, see Figure 62. These streams can be live through a video feed or downloaded by users. Two main types were found during research: as a news/communication tool and broadcasting council meetings online. The forms of webcasting are not homogenous in that it would be both hard and less relevant to measure activity and compare them between municipalities. For this reason, the only indicator for this media form is the type
of webcast which is used: one-way streaming with no response, live events with no response, webcasting with response allowed, and webcasting with live response (e.g. chatting during a live webcast of a council meeting).

![Example of Webcasts](image)

**Figure 62 – Examples of Webcasts (Amsterdam & Almere)**

**Social Networks**

A social network is a website where users can create their own page/profile, connect with many different people, and socialize with each other. The three chosen social networks are LinkedIn, Facebook, and Hyves. These are the three most popular networks in the Netherlands (Hyped.nl, 2009).

For LinkedIn the following indicators were measured: number of members, number of members per number of residents, and the presence of a link on the municipal website. More indicators were originally chosen, but LinkedIn groups are closed and membership is accepted only by the group leader. This made it impossible to retrieve data on the amount of news items, discussions and other posts within the group without involving the municipality itself. This forms a weakness within the measurement tool.

For Facebook, see Figure 63, the following indicators were measured: the number of members, the number of members per number of residents, the amount of wall posts per month, and the presence of a link on the municipal website. Other indicators were also originally chosen such as the amount of discussion posts, the number of photos uploaded, and the amount of news items. These aspects are not standard on every Facebook page however, and would thus skew the comparisons.

![Example of municipal Facebook](image)

**Figure 63 – Example of municipal Facebook (Den Haag)**
For Hyves, see Figure 64, the following indicators were measured: the number of members, the number of members per number of residents, the number of blog messages per month, the amount of scraps per month, the amount of scraps per month per member, the amount of polls, and the presence of a link on the municipal website.

**Twitter**

Twitter is a free micro blogging service that allows its users to send and read short messages called tweets, see Figure 65. Users can follow each other to subscribe to all the tweets they send out. The indicators which are measured are the amount of followers, the amount of followers per resident, the amount of tweets per month, the number of users the municipality is following, and the presence of a link on the municipal website. Only municipal twitter accounts were checked, not the personal twitters of alderman or other officials.

**Media Community**

The two media forms categorized as media communities are Flickr and Youtube, see Figure 66. These are also considered social network sites but as they are focused only on media content they have been placed in a separate category. Flickr is made specifically for the sharing of photos and Youtube is specifically for videos. Flickr is measured by the average number of archive photo’s per month, the number of group members, the number of members per number of residents, the number of discussion posts, the average number of replies per post, and the presence of a link on the municipal website. Youtube channels are measured by the number of uploads, the number of channel views, the number of channel views per number of residents, the number of total upload views, the number of total upload views per number of residents, the number of channel subscribers, and the presence of a link on the municipal website.
Chat

Chatting is an online media form where users can send each other text messages in a live environment or through an application such as MSN Messenger. Such chat sessions can be many-to-many or a one-on-one conversation. It is most useful for connecting people who are long distances apart but wish to converse live.

There are two main types of chat which were found on municipal websites: the first being a one-on-one chat function with the municipal organization and the second being a chat session with a municipal official. The first is generally meant for client service purposes but this was accepted because information requests or other questions can be related to eParticipation and is thus relevant. The second type is more important for eParticipation as citizens can speak directly with an official about a particular theme and share ideas, see Figure 67. The chat service is measured by its type: service desk chat during work hours, live events, both the previous two types, and a chat room with multiple people.

Interactive Map

An interactive map is an application where information such as notices (bekendmakingen) and landmarks are shown on a digital map of an area. Users can interact in some form with these maps, such as placing their own items, reacting to others, or selecting different types of information to view. The indicators reflect these types of interaction: one-way municipal information, reactions possible, discussion with other users, and users being able to post their own items. Also included in this media form is the website www.verbeterdebuurt.nl, see Figure 68, which is an increasingly popular website where users can post problems and ideas on a map; these are then sent through to participating municipalities. The website registers a score based on how the municipality handles the problems and ideas which they receive. This same score serves as an extra indicator.
Figure 68 – Example of an interactive map (verbeterdebuurt.nl)

Experimental Media Forms

Table 4 – Experimental media forms with indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Form</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simulation / Game</td>
<td>type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>educative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>realism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ePetition</td>
<td>municipal section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># signable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># finished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fail %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>avg. # signatures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>avg. # signatures / residents*10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>link op municipal website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiki</td>
<td># members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># members / residents*10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># edits/user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>return revisions / # editors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual World</td>
<td>type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory Budget</td>
<td>type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatbot</td>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bonus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>question test score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reaction &amp; suggest questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Support Systems</td>
<td>Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># elements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Simulation / Games

Simulation and games are often used to entertain and/or educate the players. They are a fun way to interact and absorb content, which makes them especially interesting to attract younger users. Since simulations and games can be completely different in focus and scope, the indicators are focused on the type of game (single player informative, single player consultative, multiplayer informative, multiplayer consultative) and how fun, educative, and realistic they are (Harteveld, et al., 2007). Only one of the tested municipalities had some games, so it is unclear whether it is possible to see how many people play the games and their effectiveness. The scoring on how fun, educative, and realistic they are is also a subjective measurement; a complete test would need a representative sample of users to test the games and rate them.

![Example of an educative game (Zoetermeer)](image)

**Figure 69 – Example of an educative game (Zoetermeer)**

ePetition

Petitions are a formal written request by members of the community which is signed by all supporters. Institutional systems often require a minimum amount of signatures in order for the petition to be accepted by the municipal council for example. The website [www.petities.nl](http://www.petities.nl) allows users to create their own petitions online and get people to give their digital signatures (name, address, email), see Figure 70. Municipalities can create their own section (loket) and all petitions for that region will be sent directly to a contact person within the organization. The benefit of this service is that petitions can reach more people online than if they went door-to-door. Indicators for this media form include: the presence of a municipal section, the number of signable petitions, the number of finished petitions, the number of rejected petitions, a fail percentage (# rejected / total petitions), the average number of signatures per number of residents, and the presence of a link on the municipal website.

![Example of ePetitions (Groningen)](image)

**Figure 70 – Examples of ePetitions (Groningen)**
**Wiki**

A wiki is a collaborative software application which allows web pages to be created and changed by all the users involved. It makes use of the principles of self-organization and the wisdom of the crowds. Wikipedia\(^7\) is the most famous example of this application, where an online encyclopedia is managed by volunteers around the world who continually add and change information. This service is also leveraged by organization for project work. The indicators proposed for this service are: the number of members signed on, the number of edits per user, and the number of return revisions per the number of members (Taraborelli, 2008). As of yet no municipality that was used in the research made use of a wiki. However, according to Friedolien de Fraiture (expert interview, see Appendix C – Interview Notes) the municipality of Zeist is currently experimenting with the design of a wiki.

**Virtual World**

Virtual worlds are digitally rendered representations of their real-world counterparts or even a fictional world where users can walk around and interact. The creation of virtual worlds is on the rise, especially in the gaming industry where massively-multiplayer-online (MMO) games are set in increasingly elaborate virtual worlds. From a public management perspective they are often used as information tools about an area or to visualize new spatial planning projects before they are built. A small selection of municipalities has started making use of virtual worlds to create digital city guides, see Figure 71. Since virtual worlds could in theory be quite diverse in their objective and functionality, the indicator for this media form is focused on the level of interaction between users, the interaction with the municipality, and the ability to interact and create content. It would be useful to have a better indicator of how active these virtual worlds are, perhaps the producer has data which shows the total time visitors are active in the world for example.

**Participatory Budget**

A participatory budget is a system where the municipality decides with its constituents what will happen with either the entire budget or some part of it. This concept was made famous in Brazil, where towns partake in a complex process of communal decision-making and voting with regard to the budget\(^8\). In the Netherlands, a similar concept is found in municipalities and is often referred to as a district budget (wijkbudget) or livability budget (leefbaarheidsbudget). Citizens can send in an idea and depending on the cost and the number of supporters, the municipality will allocate funds and other resources to see that

---

\(^7\) [http://en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

The project is implemented, see Figure 72. What is measured here is the ability to send and discuss such ideas on the municipal website on a scale of 0 to 4. A recommendation is to request information from the municipality on how often ideas are sent in and how often they are actually implemented.

**Goedidee indienen**

De gemeente Groningen wil zoveel mogelijk goede ideeën van wijkbewoners ondersteunen. Elk idee moet daarom voldoen aan een aantal voorwaarden.

Door het beantwoorden van 3 vragen komt u bij het aanmeldingsformulier. Na invulling van dit formulier drukt u op de knop ‘verzenden’.

Ik wil een goed idee indienen.

Wij raden u dan ook aan om onderstaande vragen in het formulier voor te bereiden.

- Omschrijving idee
- Minimaal 9 namen van mensen uit de buurt die uw idee ondersteunen
- Schatting van de kosten
- Globale begroting
- Waarom uw idee bijdraagt aan de leefbaarheid van uw wijk.

**Figure 72 – Example of a participatory budget (Groningen)**

**Chatbot**

A chatbot is a program designed to simulate intelligent conversation. They are often employed as online help or customer service as conversational agent. They provide a more personal touch and make the user feel more comfortable. Much like the chat function, it is geared more towards eGovernment customer service type goals, but it is included because the chatbot may provide information or another service which is linked to eParticipation. There is no best way to test chatbots except perhaps to ask a representative sample about their experiences with the chatbot. Since such a survey would require a significant amount of time and effort for such a small part of this measurement tool, a set of 6 keywords (mayor, newsletter, city council, citizen initiative, blog, complaint) was chosen which were presented to the chatbot and the usefulness of the response was tested. The indicator is based on how many of the keywords of the total that the chatbot had an answer for. At this point the only municipality with a chatbot is Almere, see Figure 73, and it is a rather primitive example.

A better example of a chatbot, but not from a municipality, is Billy from the online web store bol.com, see Figure 73. Considering that such a large investment is needed for a good application, it is not likely that many municipalities will make use of this media form.

**Figure 73 – Example of a chatbot (Almere)**
A group support system is an electronic meeting system which is used for collaborative meetings and group work. The example shown in the figure to the right is set in an office space, but it could just as easily be hosted on the internet with users sitting in from different places. The indicators are based on the type of system (asynchronous vs. synchronous activities) (Ellis, et al., 1991), and the number of elements of the total which are implemented (generate, reduce, clarify, evaluate, consensus). These elements are the 6 patterns of collaboration (Read, et al., 2009). As of yet, no municipality from the sample uses this system, although a few municipalities indicated in interviews that they were used for internal group work (Appendix C – Interview Notes).

**Support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICT Support</th>
<th>Available info</th>
<th>Profiles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Council meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Voting behavior council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Privacy Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disclaimer / Proclaimer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Web guidelines</td>
<td>Citizen initiative info</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Score Webrichtlijnen.nl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Certification Drempelvrij.nl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first part of the support section is focused on the type of information which is available to citizens via the municipal website. Namely, the availability of:

- Profiles about the mayor, aldermen, and the city council (descriptions, contact information, secondary functions, social media).
• Information and/or audio/video streams of council meetings (reports, audio/video downloads, live stream).
• Information on council voting behavior via www.watstemtmijnraad.nl.
• A privacy statement about what will be done with information about citizens on the website.
• A disclaimer or proclaimer about the rights of citizens and the municipality, the expected output and behavior of the municipality towards online visitors, and sometimes a statement about copyright. Disclaimers are more defensive in nature, where organizations protect their own rights and image whereas a proclaimer indicates what an organization will do for the user in terms of service levels, etc. For the sake of transparency and accountability, a proclaimer is preferred.
• Information about how to send in initiatives, speak during a council meeting or other participatory means available to citizens.

The second part is focused on website accessibility. This aspect uses two indicators to test how accessible the website is for those with seeing or hearing disabilities. The first indicator is an automatic test done via www.webrichtlijnen.nl/monitor where 47 factors are tested and a score is given based on satisfying the criteria. The second is the certification of an organization called drempelvrij.nl that uses a more complex version of the webrichtlijnen.nl test and gives out a specific certificate based on the score attained. In the future these two scoring systems will be integrated, for now they are complementary.

ICT Scoring
This section describes how the indicators described in the previous section are transformed into scores for each municipality. The method involves assigning weights to each indicator and the range of possible scores. It should be mentioned here that not all indicators described in the previous section are used for the scoring; either because the results were not homogenous, were functions used to calculate other indicators (such as members per resident) or unsuitable for scoring. The weights given to the indicators are based on a personal evaluation based on the experience gained during literature research and expert interviews. While several verification and evaluation tests were used, such as extreme value testing and face evaluation, this forms a weakness in the measurement tool. In subsequent research, these values should be evaluated through surveys or another extensive test. Scores are determined per media form, per ICT type (standard/innovative/experimental), and total scores.

Table 6 – Indicator Weights and Points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Form</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Response time</td>
<td># days</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>answers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td>indication of response time</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Points</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>present</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td>personalized composition</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># of publications indicated</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Points</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>Gov’t-&gt;Burger</td>
<td>present</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Burger-&gt;Gov’t</td>
<td>present</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poll</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>present</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td>results shown</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>possibility to react about poll</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td># of surveys per year</td>
<td>results shown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>avg. # respondents / residents*10.000</td>
<td>formal survey panel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Points</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Scores</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSS Feed</td>
<td># messages / week</td>
<td>explanation about use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>type</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td># posts / month</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forum</td>
<td>avg. # posts per thread</td>
<td>explanation of rules and use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webcast</td>
<td>type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio/Video</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networks</td>
<td># members / residents*10.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>link on municipal website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td># members / residents*10.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># wall posts / month</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyves</td>
<td>link on municipal website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td># members / residents*10.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td># tweets / month</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipality</td>
<td>link on municipal website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Community</td>
<td>avg. # archive photo's / month</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flickr</td>
<td>link on municipal website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youtube</td>
<td># uploads</td>
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<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chat</td>
<td>type</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Points</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Signed up for verbeterdebuurt.nl</td>
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<td>Total Scores - Innovative</td>
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<td>Simulation / Game</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
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</tr>
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<td>ePetition</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>Wiki</td>
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<td>15</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Virtual World</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget door Burgers</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Chatbot</td>
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<td>10</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Available info</td>
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<td>Profiles</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting behavior council</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Privacy Statement</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disclaimer / Proclaimer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen initiative info</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score Webrichtlijnen.nl</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification Drempelvrij.nl</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web guidelines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All indicators which are not “type” or “bonus” indicators are translated from raw data to a score from 0-4. Below is a list of all translations:
In order to make use of the participation ladder a matrix is used to link all media forms to the participation ladder. For every media form a weight is given which indicates how relevant it is for each level of the participation ladder. The matrix data is based on literature research (Central Office of Information, 2009) and the expert opinions of Mark Leenaerts, Mieke van Heesewijk, and Nico Schram.
(see section 2.5.3 for personal information); this does form a weak point in the measurement tool however. For a more valid matrix, a representative survey would need to be executed to analyze the perceptions about what is relevant. The matrix was tested for several different scales, a score from 1-5 was found to be sufficient for a stable matrix. While it is possible to increase the scale to 1-10 for example, the scores are more likely to skew towards the center.

Table 8 – Matrix of Weights relating Media to the Participation ladder

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Inform</th>
<th>Consult</th>
<th>Advise</th>
<th>Coproduce</th>
<th>Co-decide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poll</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSS Feed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forum</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webcast</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networks</td>
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</tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive Map</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulation/Game</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ePetition</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiki</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual World</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory Budget</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatbot</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Support Systems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where relevant, weights per media form are divided across multiple indicators in order to maintain a balance (e.g. both types of blogs). Numbers which are red indicate weights which contain iF-functions, meaning they will only count once a certain condition has been fulfilled. This refers to “type” indicators where a score will only count (for example) for consultation if the service allows response. So a blog without response will scores points for informing but not for consultation; only if a higher level is reached and response is allowed will the function for consultation grant points. Scores for each level of the participation ladder are calculated by multiplying each weight with the relevant score per media form, then adding them up together, and dividing the sum by the total amount of possible points. The full scores are shown in the table and figures below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Almere</th>
<th>Amsterdam</th>
<th>Den Haag</th>
<th>Renswoude</th>
<th>Texel</th>
<th>Utrecht</th>
<th>Groningen</th>
<th>Delft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inform</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advise</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coproduce</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-decide</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dordrecht</th>
<th>Eindhoven</th>
<th>Breda</th>
<th>Tilburg</th>
<th>Rotterdam</th>
<th>Houten</th>
<th>Zoetermeer</th>
<th>Amersfoort</th>
<th>Reeuwijk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inform</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advise</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coproduce</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-decide</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Full Set of Scores for the Participation Ladder

Figure 76 – Spider graph of all participation ladder scores
Figure 77 – Bar graph of all participation ladder scores
**Actor Analysis**

The first application of Social Technographics is connecting the roles to the media forms identified previously. This was done using the same method as the participation ladder matrix, where weights are allocated to identify which media forms are most appropriate for each role, as shown in Table 10. The same weaknesses are applicable here as well. Also relevant here are the red numbers that indicate where if-functions are present which indicate that the score only becomes relevant if the media form is above a certain level. The same scoring method is used as well, as seen in Table 11 and Figure 78. The matrix data is based on desk research and the expert opinions of Mark Leenaerts, Mieke van Heesewijk, and Nico Schram.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spectators</th>
<th>Joiners</th>
<th>Collectors</th>
<th>Critics</th>
<th>Creators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
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<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
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<td>Forum</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media Community</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive Map</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulation/Game</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ePetition</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual World</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory Budget</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatbot</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Support Systems</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>44.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Almere</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>Den Haag</td>
<td>Renswoude</td>
<td>Texel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spectators</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joiners</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectors</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critics</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creators</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Dordrecht</th>
<th>Eindhoven</th>
<th>Breda</th>
<th>Tilburg</th>
<th>Rotterdam</th>
<th>Houten</th>
<th>Zoetermeer</th>
<th>Amersfoort</th>
<th>Reeuwijk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spectators</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joiners</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectors</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critics</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creators</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 78 – Spider graph of all technographic role scores
Figure 79 – Bar graph of all technographic role scores
Demographical Information

For each municipality data was found via the Central Bureau of Statistics\(^9\) that matched the data found in the Forrester Social Technographics data, see Table 12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality Residents</th>
<th>Average Residents</th>
<th>Almere</th>
<th>Amsterdam</th>
<th>Den Haag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># men</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
<td>92252</td>
<td>371858</td>
<td>237265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># vrouwen</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
<td>93494</td>
<td>383747</td>
<td>244599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># (18-24)</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>17016</td>
<td>76248</td>
<td>44105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># (25-34)</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>25481</td>
<td>141724</td>
<td>77753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># (35-44)</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>32477</td>
<td>128518</td>
<td>78986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># (45-54)</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>30493</td>
<td>106007</td>
<td>65342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># (55+)</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>31421</td>
<td>163851</td>
<td>116128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Originally, a link was also made between the ICT scores and the data regarding gender and age; that is to say, to what extent are the ICT media forms fulfilling the patterns shown in gender and age. Unfortunately, the data did not provide any significant patterns or outcomes like the ones seen with the technographic roles themselves. This is most likely because of the only small differences between categories. They are not polarized enough, and so the scores seem almost equal per age category. For this reason, these two outputs (gender and data) were taken out.

In order to continue to probe this demographical issue, the data per municipality and the technographics matrix were presented to the municipalities during the case study interview in order to question if they were aware of the differences in age and the impact this had on web usage, and if they had any particular strategy with regard to focusing on particular age categories. Gender was not asked about as the balance is almost always around 50/50 in each municipality.

**Municipal Organization**

The matrix data for this part of the measurement tool is based on literature research (Central Office of Information, 2009; Haverkamp, 2007) and the expert opinions of Mark Leenaerts, Mieke van Heesewijk, and Nico Schram (see section 2.5.3 on personal information). The same weaknesses applicable to the other matrices are true here as well.

Table 13 – Weight matrix relating the participation ladder to the policy cycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(scale 1-5)</th>
<th>Agenda-setting</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Policy Creation</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Monitoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisering</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coproducing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-deciding</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These matrix weights are then multiplied by the scores each municipality received for the participation ladder section. Besides the relative subjectivity of the matrix itself, this multiplication provides an additional weakness in that it is based on a multiplication of two subjective matrices (any invalidity is compounded). This would not be an issue when the two separate matrices are made more valid through a complete survey, as recommended previously. The full set of outcomes can be seen in the table and figure below.

Table 14 – Full set of scores on the policy cycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Almere</th>
<th>Amsterdam</th>
<th>Den Haag</th>
<th>Renswoude</th>
<th>Texel</th>
<th>Utrecht</th>
<th>Groningen</th>
<th>Delft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agenda-setting</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Creation</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dordrecht</th>
<th>Eindhoven</th>
<th>Breda</th>
<th>Tilburg</th>
<th>Rotterdam</th>
<th>Houten</th>
<th>Zoetermeer</th>
<th>Amersfoort</th>
<th>Reeuwijk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agenda-setting</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Creation</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 80 – Spider graph of all policy cycle scores
Figure 81 – Bar graph of all policy cycle scores
Appendix C – Interview Notes

Below is a list of the interviews from various institutions and organizations.

- **Berenschot**
  - Mark Leenaerts (eParticipation group)
  - Rachel Beerepoot (Research department)
  - Maaike van Hooidonk (Communication section)
  - Gemma Post-Dijkstra (eParticipation group)
  - Suzanne van Schaik (eParticipation group)
  - Wim Engels (eParticipation Group)
  - Roundtable session within Information Management department

- **TU Delft**
  - Anne Fleur van Veenstra
  - Marijn Janssen

- **External**
  - Mieke van Heesewijk – Burgerlink
  - Friedolien de Fraiture – Ministry of Internal Affairs and Kingdom Relations
  - Wessel de Valk – The Crowds
  - Bob Stegman – OnzeWijk
  - Survey – Nico Schram (Masters Degree in Text and Communication, Lecturer Fontys Hogeschool)

**Expert Interviews**

*Rachel Beerepoot – Manager (Afdeling Research)*

- Er moet duidelijkheid zijn over ambtelijk versus administratie
- Burgerpanels worden vaker door oudere mannen gebruikt
- Alternatief om de Motivaction rollen te koppelen aan de participatieladder
- Bij uitvoering fase van de beleidscyclus is informeren toch wel handig
- Mogelijk verschillende patronen binnen gemeenten, grote/middelgrote/kleine gemeente
  - Ook mogelijk: grote gemeente qua oppervlakte, minder bevolking

*Gemma Post – Managing Consultant (Information Management)*

- Nuanceer tussen het politieke gedeelte en het ambtelijke gedeelte
- Gebruik van de participatieladder
  - Coproduceren vs. meebeslissen – aan de ene kant geeft coproduceren meer macht aan de gemeente om zich wel of niet aan de uitkomsten te houden en bij meebeslissen ligt er meer macht bij de burger, maar aan de andere kant is coproduceren een complexer process waarbij ook burgers met middelen aan tafel moeten komen zitten. Het result is een creatief process tussen twee partijen, terwijl meebeslissen de macht geeft aan burgers om te kiezen tussen bepaalde alternatieven en niet zozeer die alternatieven samen uitwerken.
- Zorg bij gesprekken gemeenten dat de uitkomsten eerst gepresenteerd worden en dan advies aan hen. Alleen een simpel uitleg van het model.
  - Koppel de harde data aan softe informatie (conclusies, grafieken, voorbeelden)
Maaike van Hooijdonk – Consultant Public Affairs (Communicatie)

- Trek media vormen door naar beleidscyclus, niet alleen participatieladder.
- Gebruik beschrijvende voorbeelden bij gemeenten
- C-scan van Communicatie, wordt ingevuld door klanten en ze kunnen dan doorbellen naar Berenschot.

Mieke van Heesewijk – Policy Advisor (Burgerlink)

- Koppelen van verslagen kan niet via pdf; xml versie nodig.
- Burgerlink werkt met TNO aan eParticipatie Monitor, in kaart brengen van alle initiatieven.
  - Mogelijke samenwerking met eParticipatie Monitor; publiceren op website.
- ICT / Automatisering / Helpdesk kan tegen werken ivm restricties of applicaties en/of widgets (Second Life, Deli.ci.ous en Ning widgets, enz.).
  - Resulteert in extra vraag bij gemeenten: Hoe goed is samenwerking en openheid enz.

Friedolien de Fraiture – Policy Advisor (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken)

- Zeist heeft een Wiki – door Wiki Wise
  - Lex Slaghuys
  - Nog niet te vinden op gemeentelijke website
- Zoetermeer – Simulatie / Game onder Sport en Vrijetijd
  - Ralph Boeije – Alares
- Delicious widget mag niet geïnstalleerd worden (bij Min. Bzk.), veel restricties en angst bij IT afdeling.
- Utrecht heeft training Web 2.0 in de vorm van: FF Lunchen 2.0
  - Check of training verplicht is of voluntary
- Ambtenaar 2.0 geeft ook training
  - Kan trouwens ook via hun vragen stellen of bij eparticipatie.nl
- Meenemen van Amsterdam Opent met gebruik van crowdsourcing (one-off project)
- Er is een trade-off te maken of je binnen of buiten je gemeente participeert als ambtenaar
  - Gebruik binnen advies meetinstrument t.o.v. kosten/kennis, enz.
  - Moet wel expliciet terug gebracht worden binnen de gemeente
- Duidelijk in benchmarking kant en advies kant, zeker de 2e moet nog wat verder uitgewerkt worden.

Wessel de Valk – Eigenaar (The Crowds)

- Let op bij gebruik van concept Groupware: een wiki is ook groupware, nuanceer
  - Vormt ook een groot IT problem
- CMS moet veilig en robuust zijn voor gemeente, daarom niet gemaakt voor publicatie en media
- Vaak is er toch wel een participatie ambtenaar, vaak bij Communicatie
  - Niveau van zulke eParticipatie ambtenaren is niet altijd hoog
Gemeentelijk website moet aansluiten op moderne gebruikers, alles moet voor de hand liggen en voldoen aan de verwachtingen.

eParticipatie is alleen een kwestie van tijd
  - gebruik van sociale media is van de nieuwe generatie
  - daar zal het budget wel op moeten aansluiten

Vaak ingezet om draagvlak te creeren, niet altijd veel moeite

Niveau participatie is een driedeling: 1% echt actief, 9% doet wel eens mee en 90% doet eigenlijk niks
  - Beslissingen nemen gebaseerd op zo'n klein gedeelte kan wel grote gevolgen hebben

Designers van gemeentelijke website kopen vaak templates
  - Zit niet alles in, en veranderen kost geld en moeite

The Crowds heeft een ouderen platform ontworpen, zien wel 62% van ouderen die online bezig zijn. Bestaat nu wel 4-6 jaar.

Volgende stap zijn mobiele varianten van website met bijbehorende applicaties

Succesfactoren voor eparticipatie gemeente:
  - Commitment, budget op jaarbasis, portefeuille college, begin met pilots, zichtbaar zijn op andere platforms

Sluit ook aan bij de al populaire website, volg de netwerken

Communicatie is niet altijd pro-actief, kwestie van weinig beslissingsmacht

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**Bob Stegman – Conceptontwikkelaar (OnzeWijk)**

- Reflectie of de kloof bestaat: er komt in die zin genoeg vraag vanuit gemeenten om websites op te richten voor eParticipatie
- Vraag komt meestal vanuit Communicatie-afdeling
  - Project managers willen klus klaren en dan kunnen burgers als irritant worden ervaren
  - Maar met burgers erbij is het meestal in een keer goed, maken minder fouten
  - Meestal als ze zo ver zijn, zijn ze er enthousiast over
- OnzeWijk houdt zich eigenlijk alleen bij SMS / Poll / Enquete aspecten, bij wijkprojecten
  - Kiezen voor standard vormen op dat ze richten op de massa mensen, niet alleen de enthousiast mee-doeners; gaat om draagvlak
- Experimentele media gaat te ver meestal, niet makkelijk voor iedereen
- Sociale netwerken op zetten kunnen mensen gewoon zelf doen
  - Ga zelf als gemeente op andere netwerken zitten, niet weer de wiel uitvinden
  - Maar als het niet al bestaat, faciliteer dan en geef het zo snel mogelijk uit handen
- Advies: ICT Total Scores van hoog naar laag laten zien.
- Wel verrast dat coproductie scores lager zijn dan meebeslissen, terwijl ze lager in de ladder staan.
- In die zin zijn participatievormen soms ook lastig te definieren, zeker in relatie tot de mediavormen
- OnzeWijk houdt het bij de critics kant
  - Een actieve website waar je duidelijk dingen kan doen is leuker en effectiever
- Meetinstrument geeft wel een goed beeld van hoe het gaat
- Kan nog veel gebeuren binnen eParticipatie, nog te veel experimenten en niet genoeg systematisch
- “build it and they will come”: dat werkt niet, je moet het makkelijk maken, duidelijke keuzes en ook incentives
- Ambtenaar denkt vaak: te veel gedoe, kost meer tijd
  - Is niet echt zo, discussie avonden kost meer tijd en energie
- Ik zie ook de gemeentelijke website als portal
  - Zeker bij grote gemeenten is wijk belangrijker
  - Maar vaak zijn wijk websites wel van slechte kwaliteit
- In die zin is er een verschil in de rol van wijkwebsites in grote en kleine gemeenten
- Gebruik van zo veel media als twitter, mensen hebben information overload: wie zit er op alle gemeentelijke nieuws en van wethouders enz. te wachten; behalve de extreem actieve mensen
- Reactie op stelling- ICT is vaak een drempel: “Wij omzeilen de ICT afdeling”
- Ziet ook weinig medewerkers die specifiek werken aan eParticipatie
  - Intentie is er in het algemeen wel, uitkomsten daarentegen vaak de meest simpelste oplossing
- Face-to-face kan langzaam zijn, ambtenaren hebben er ook niet altijd zin in, komen ook altijd dezelfde mensen, mensen kunnen lastig worden, charisma/mediatie skills nodig
  - Online is sneller en elke mening is evenveel waard.
- 25% van de mensen die stemmen geven ook een inhoudelijke reactie op de forum
- Gebruiken groepen van stemcodes om type mensen te tracken
- Persoonlijke brief als incentive/advertising werkt veel beter dan een nieuwsbrief of iets dergelijks
- Elke project heeft ook een vertaling nodig vanuit de gemeente naar burger; niet alleen in taal maar ook wat de opties en consequenties zijn.
- Verbeterdebuurt.nl is handige website voor opinies, duidelijker dan Breda Morgen.nl

**Case Study Interviews**

**Gemeente Dordrecht**

*Functie geinterviewde persoon: Senior Communicatie Adviseur*

- Sfeer kantelt, de goede kant op
  - Sinds zomer 2009 is de directieraad erbij, besluit ligt er en wacht nog op een beslissing.
  - 6 projecten gepland
- Onderwerp ligt goed binnen Dordrecht, e-loket goed bezig en glasvezel komt er aan.
  - Altijd goede cijfers bij Overheid.nl Monitor
- Content management systeem (CMS) ontwikkelt zich, maar Dordrecht heeft nog niet de laatste updates die interessant zijn voor eParticipatie
  - Dit komt nog, waarschijnlijk voor de wijkwebsites en/of de nieuwe projecten.
- Ervaring met projecten en OnzeWijk is een goede opkomst: 30-50%
- Webpanel (burgerpanel) is ook in de planning
- Concept van stemmen en discussie binnen projecten is hoofdzak
- Niveau van besef – directie niveau / intern is Dordrecht bezig met het vertalen vanuit eigen gebruik naar communicatie met de burger
  - Zeker qua sociale media, steeds populairder bij medewerkers
  - Project “Burgers aan Zet” – heeft aandacht gekregen intern
- Trainingen liggen klaar, nog niet ingezet / wel een aantal workshops als introductie
  - Vooral voor kennismaking met eParticipatie en sociale media
- Veel experimenten bezig
  - Wijkprojecten
  - Steunt ook projecten zoals Cilio – begon als Boulevard of Dans
    - Uitgebreid naar jongerenwebsite, echte Web 2.0 Community
  - Vaak op onderwijs gericht (DAVE, met Da Vinci college)
Feedback niveau is goed / web vormt meestal een onderdeel van de projecten van de gemeente
  - Zelfs een project met alleen web ondersteuning gedaan (geen brieven met info, enz.) – dat is goed verlopen (loose experiment)

Wijk websites worden vaker gebruikt voor participatie aspecten
  - Gemeente investeert om het persoonlijk te maken en inhoudelijk discussie te hebben.

Het is moeilijk om te scheiden tussen online en offline participatie, vormt een geheel binnen projecten.

Doelstelling qua eParticipatie ligt vast, soms moeilijk om verantwoording vast te stellen door de organisatie heen
  - Web en sociale media werkt bottom-up; laat het ook zo groeien in de organisaties
  - Wel leiders binnen directie: Karel van Hengel (Publieksdiensten) en Marjan Haverkus (ICT)
  - Ook wergroep actief – 5 man verspreid over verschillende afdelingen/thema's (ICT/ participatie/shared service center/ CMS/wijkgericht-werken/media-communicatie)

6 nieuwe projecten
  - O.a. communities opzetten bij vogelbuurt, groen energie, gezamenlijke inkoop

Poll op gemeentelijke website – meer een leuke gadget dan echt inhoudelijk relevant
  - Leuker om diepere vormen via enquête en discussieforum
  - Project based ook

Dordrecht onderschatte het project in Krispijn – helemaal van het begin, te veel opties en medewerkers gingen oud gedrag tonen.

Nieuwe CMS gadgets komen er aan / maar nog niet voor Dordrecht.nl
  - Meer voor de wijk websites (er zijn ook wel gewoon zoveel websites buiten de hoofdsite)
  - Willen ook een nieuwe forum in zetten

CMS openstellen: er zijn nog te veel opties / moeilijk te gebruiken (zeker voor leken)
  - Proberen Joomla te gebruiken met een kale editor
  - Handiger voor partners en bewoners
  - Maakt het mogelijk om eigen blog in te zetten enz.

Op langere termijn zou het ook leuk zijn om het intranet met buiten te koppelen
  - Wel lastige situatie wat betreft eigenaren CMS want “eigenlijk van niemand”.
  - De SSC kost geld, niet zeker hoe de verdeling zit tussen partners.

Dordste Aanpak – van begin tot einde
  - Lange traditie, zet zich voort via e-participatie

Mogelijk om via de website per pagina te reageren, vooral gericht op dienstverlening (informatie niet te vinden enz.) maar het kan ook inhoudelijk zijn.
  - Nog de vraag hoe je dit kan meenemen? Enabler/Ondersteuning? Bonus?

Twitter inderdaad voor informeren alleen; mogelijk alleen Den Haag die het voor respons inzet
  - Nog niet interactief
  - Yammer als alternatief getest, ging niet echt

Op zich wel veel ouderen 55+ die meedoen online
  - Ook veel onder 18
o Vaak omdat het projectgericht is en zo persoonlijker en lagerdrempelig

• Trade-off tussen de algemene website en aparte website voor jongeren en wijken, enz.
  o Wijkwebsite zijn op hun manier en specifiek
  o Algemene persbericht via gem. website vs. de persoonlijke vertaling op de wijk website

• Raadplegen steeds populairder (polling) maar Dordrecht wil eigenlijk gewoon door naar adviseren (forum)

• Forum werkt goed bij projecten – gaat om specifieke problemen en thema’s; geleid vanuit de raadsfracties

• Intree Dordrecht + VVV: heeft het idee voor Dordrecht om ook met website concept te gaan: ik ben hier als burger / bewoner / tourist / enz. (populair idee, doen anderen ook)

• Conclusies:
  o Maak duidelijk op de hoofdsite dat er meerdere websites zijn (vooral wijkwebsites) (portal idee)
    ▪ Zelfde met andere mediavormen
  o Handig om goed beeld te hebben van wie wat heeft
    ▪ Goed voor contact, netwerken en discussie met andere gemeenten.
  o Waar staan wij zelf
    ▪ Goed om intern te delen en informeren
    ▪ Want het is nog onduidelijk wie wat doet via internet
      • Houvast voor discussie

**Gemeente Eindhoven**

*Functie geinterviewde persoon: Staf Interactief Beleid*

• Group Support Systemen wel erg vaak ingezet tijdens projecten

• Waren nog aan het nadenken over hoe wijkbudgetten in te zetten en hoe online
  o Ik heb Groningen als voorbeeld genoemd

• Website is op dit moment erg traditioneel / statisch

• Erg actief op Ning
  o Meenemen instrument?

• Helmond heeft een goede portal concept voor e-participatie

• Web 2.0 werkgroep is wel aan de gang, sinds kort eentje vanuit Communicatie
  o Nog niet eentje expliciet voor e-participatie

• Training
  o Samenspraak – offline participatie training
  o Binnenkort Master classes in Social Media (onderdeel van Groene Golf: Min. Bzk)

• Budget komt uit taskforce burgerparticipatie / op zich tevreden erover

• Nog geen duidelijke doelstellingen en verantwoordelijkheden
  o Gem. Sec. is nu tijdelijke leider participatie; duidelijk dat het online component ook op de agenda staat
Vorige wethouder Mary Fiers was wel een champion: eigen blog en gaf steun

- Wel veel steun vanuit ICT, die oplossingen zoekt voor de wensen
  - Maar Communicatie blijkt terughoudend; niet zo bezig nog met sociale media enz.
- Enquete meestal ingezet vanuit vraag van de raad, daar gaat de feedback ook heen
  - De rest nog geen formele processen
- Respons leeftijden / Technographics
  - Co-creatie project uiteindelijk vooral studenten en jongeren
  - Ouderen die meededen vonden het wat moeilijker, soms gewoon met email gestuurd
  - Ze kon zich daarom ook vinden in de verdeling van de rollen per leeftijd
- Websites nu vaak gewoon opgezet om te informeren en raadplegen, niet meer dan dat.
  - Waarschijnlijk daarom aparte Eindhoven Ning enz.
- Wethouders (ook blog Mary Fiers) vooral persoonlijk actief via sociale media, maar geen respons op website of algemene twitter enz.
- Conclusie: vooral nog losse experimenten, nog niet terug gebracht naar de gem. website
  - Eindhoven wel experimenteel in die zin, (waarsch. Ook vanuit Eindhoven Innovatie concept) maar heeft (nog) geen plaats op de gemeentelijke website.
  - Vooral projectgericht qua e-participatie, ook vaak wijkgericht

**Gemeente Breda**

*Functie geinterviewde personen: Senior Communicatie Adviseur & Communicatie adviseur*

- Nieuwe website komt er aan: lessen vanuit Breda Morgen worden vertaald naar gemeentelijke website
  - Breda Morgen is van de stad, half beheerd door gemeente
- Op dit moment website vooral gericht op informeren/raadplegen, straks veel meer
  - Helemaal Web 2.0 ingericht: rating, tags, semantics, personalized
- Toch wel een omslag nodig binnen de gemeente; zoveel ideeën en reacties komen er binnen
  - Moeten van nee, vanwege deze redenen naar: ok, dit kunnen wij wel doen
- Wensen en verwachtingen van burgers bleven staan zonder dat de gemeente iets faciliteerde of reactie gaf
  - Vooral de rol van de facilitator opzoeken
- Chatbot stond wel ter discussie: moeilijk programmeren, daardoor hoge kosten; tegenover: wat haal je er nou precies uit?
- Simulatie aanwezig, ViaBreda met Prorail. (Niet kunnen vinden, niet meegenomen)
- Ondersteuning/Enablers: single-sign-on, meer vanuit dienstverlening maar zou ook mogelijk meer toepasselijk worden in de toekomst.
- Verschillende niveaus van reacties zullen aanwezig zijn: anoniem vs. profiel
- Gemeente maakt altijd een afweging tussen doel, kosten en uitkomsten.
- Hebben ook wijkbudgetten, Hart voor Buurt
- Groep Waarderend Vernieuwen – contact pool (aannemers, enz.) helpen met faciliteren van co-productie projecten enz.
Vanuit de gemeente opgericht

• Breda Morgen heeft nu een specifieke karakter; gemeentelijk website moet alles afdekken
  o Dus ook zo qua reacties
• Website wordt all-in-one, zowel dienstverlening als participatie; kan inloggen, alle Web 2.0 aspecten aanwezig: rating, tagging, popular views bepaalt rangschikking
  o Alles gelinkt via semantic web met andere berichten en gemeentelijke organisatie
• Beeld van instrument klopt met huidige situatie; constatering voor een nieuwe website is juist
• Doelgroep is niet specifiek, iedereen meenemen
  o Juist niet gericht op bedrijf/toerist/burgers apart
  o Wel organisch en creatief
  o Alles wordt personalized door drag-and-drop bijvoorbeeld. Dus je kan het gewoon zelf instellen.
  o Helemaal gebouwd op social networking aspecten
• Hebben het niet echt over e-participatie, meer dialoog/meebeslissen
  o Niet alleen e- dus
  o Boek aanwezig over nieuw traject: Meedoen!
• Geografie wordt belangrijk, van stadsgids tot GIS
• Binnen gemeente wel duidelijk wat het allemaal is, maar nog niet helemaal hoe
  o Nieuwe richtlijnen in opbouw voor content beheer en reactie protocol, enz.
• Internet is nog 2e keuze beetje (“oh ja, moet daar ook nog”) -> naar click / call / face; allemaal consistent met elke waarbij click de voorkeur heeft.
• Training komt nog: onduidelijk nog wat precies
  o Medewerkers gaan meedenken, wordt veel belang aan gehecht
• Feedback wordt bijgehouden, nog niet altijd online gepost, wel direct gestuurd als er om gevraagd wordt
  o Zal bij nieuwe website veranderen waarschijnlijk
• Ambitieniveau is hoog, zo ook budget / ook uit B+W, vanwege doelstelling excellente communicatie
  “Of goed doen, of niet doen”
• Geen echte leider aanwezig voor e-participatie, zit al zo intern; iedereen trekt het
• Onderdeel van formele besluit; doelstelling top10 overheid monitor.
• Er was op zich geen doel bij Breda Morgen / heel open, organisch / geen cijfers aan gebonden
  o Kenmerkt op zich de sfeer/opzet nieuwe site
• Prima communicatie met ICT / co-productie concept
• Ieder lid van directie gevraagd over wat zij willen, waar ze mee bezig zijn
  o Wordt vertaald naar nieuwe website
  o Binnen communicatie is er een webmaster, mensen voor visie/strategie en processen
  ▪ Genoeg bruggen vanuit communicatie naar afdelingen
• Nieuwe coalitie toonde interesse in gebruik Twitter
• Doelstelling met website en andere projecten om iedereen mee te nemen (ambtenaren)
• Alle info komt in eigen beheer van lijn
• Communicatie heeft vooral adviserende rol bij bestuur/beleid (wethouders) en accounts (directie)
  o Geen redactie meer, lijn reageert zelf
  o Zelf ook op zoek naar kennis/experts wanneer ze het zelf niet weten
• Nu nog een grijs gebied wat er met inbreng gebeurt, sommige dingen wel eenvoudig
  o Directie vraag O&I die sturen enquête uit en dan gaat het ook weer zo terug.
  o BredaMorgen: droom -> stadsgesprek -> Communicatie en Directie
• 55+ mee laten doen
  o Vooral vormgeving/drempelvrij aspecten
  o Doel om beetje training te geven
  o Toch wel een grote groep op Hyves (algemeen)
  o Vaak contextgebonden wanneer ze wel/niet meedoen
• Mindset moet nog veranderen in gemeente / ook tijd kunnen krijgen of hebben voor zulke dingen
  o Richtlijnen daarvoor
• Keuze van sociale netwerken is gerichte keuze
• Zo ook de vorm van interactie, forum vs. anderen
• Leuk om live reacties te kunnen geven bij raadsvergadering
• Geen behoefte aan nieuwsbrief, niet real-time, zometeen website helemaal persoonlijk en concept is een beetje outdated (vervangen door RSS)
• Hebben wel SMS-Alert, denken aan nieuws updates en dergelijke via SMS
• Zoekfunctie moet verbetert worden
• Keuze van informatie en media: transparantie/accountability vs. lezen ze het wel (jaarverslag, enz.)
• Twitter strategie in ontwikkeling, doel is om volle interactie / niet alleen informeren
  o Eerst goed neerzetten vanuit organisatie / afspraken maken
  o Met beleid doen, niet gaan en ad hoc bijwerken
• Doel: beelden idd via Flickr en Picasa te delen
  o Hopelijk kunnen ze makkelijk allebei
  o Zelfde bij Youtube
• Web 2.0 dingen krijgen vaste plaats op website
• Doel: live chat vanuit Klant contact centrum voor dienstverlening
• Conclusies: vindt dat het een aardig beeld is, benieuwd naar algemene resultaten.

Gemeente Almere (Buiten)

*Function geinterviewde persoon: Gebiedsmanager Stadsdeel Almere*

• (e)participatie – goed om duidelijkheid te krijgen in de verschillende belangen
• Laten burgers weten wanneer informeren, consulteren of meebeslissen van toepassing is
• Online participatie is een goede ondersteuning bij burgerparticipatie
- Net intern een Hiemstra test gedaan om rollen van medewerkers te analyseren; ook een Motivaction rollen test
- Huidige protocol weerhoud ambtenaren om respons te geven op fora, enz. Alleen wanneer het ernstig wordt en ze dan formeel op moeten treden.
- Petities gaan bijvoorbeeld direct naar de raad; het wordt een politieke kwestie
  - Ambtenaren worden daarin gescheiden
- Nieuwe experiment met wiki / corporate life in Wijk Bouwmeester
- Beeld van participatie ivm informeren/raadplegen
  - In eerste instantie verbaasd dat Almere vooraan staat, maar naar de patronen/cijfers te kijken dan klopt het ja.
- Ziet 2 verschuivingen: participatie wordt vaker ingezet om draagvlak te creëren en door de vele reacties zie je een moeheid ontstaan omdat het niet meer volgens traditionele methodes gaat, er is nu veel meer procesmanagement nodig om iedereen in dezelfde richting te krijgen
- Doelstelling: maximaal haalbare met eParticipatie
- Kenmerkend voor Almere: grote projecten die invloed hebben op meerdere niveaus (gemeente, stadsdeel, wijk)
  - Heeft een invloed op de keuzes van participatie
  - Ook wanneer adviseren en meebeslissen gebeurt, heeft dat veel middelen en inzet nodig vanuit de gemeente
  - Vaak is het daarbij handiger om op buurt niveau te blijven
- Krijgt het idee dat er minimale besef is, zowel bij burgers als intern
  - Toen e-petities werden ingezet raakte het mensen wel, gelijk gebruik van gemaakt
- Qua training, er is een Almere Academie, eerder gesprekken gehad over training voor participatie, mogelijk ook een symposium organiseren
  - Bestaat nog niks, zeker niet voor sociale media en dergelijke
- De vraag groeit wel, zeker uit raad
- Er is ook een participatienota onder de gebiedsmanagers
  - Zij hebben nu meer een faciliterende/communicatieve rol
  - Zij richten zich op de vragen van burgers per stadsdeel
- Griffier is degene die meedoen aan epetities voorstelde
  - Feedback gaat ook via griffier
- Feedback vaak gebruikt in raadsvoorstellen als ondersteuning en verantwoording
- Wel nog aan de voorkant onvoldoende communicatie met burgers over wat er met hun inbreng gebeurt
  - Wel altijd bij grote projecten waar er altijd goed over nagedacht wordt
  - Maar vaker niet bij hele kleine projectjes
    - Hoewel deze toch significant en soms emotionele gevolgen kan hebben bij burgers
- Zelf behoefte om bijv. LinkedIn uit te proberen
  - Moet wel capaciteit voor vinden, modereren enz.
Gebruiken wij ook wel voldoende de dingen die wij al hebben, bijv. de Almere Hyves

- Qua leiderschap is er niemand echt aanwezig, Jorritsma met eigen blog heeft wel een voorbeeld rol.
  - Maar de protocol nu verbiedt nog zulke acties vanuit de ambtenaren kant
- Er zijn wel verantwoordelijkheden voor burgerparticipatie in het algemeen, maar niet voor e-participatie
- Qua afspraken meer algemeen: toets en analyseer burgerwensen
  - Eigen doelstellingen opgesteld voor Buiten
- Project met veiling, idee komt uit Enschede
  - Mensen komen met problemen, of groep of individueel (klein tot groot, pianoles bijv.) en anderen/particulieren doen een aanbod daar op
  - (sort of vergelijkbaar met Breda- contact pool voor aannemers enz.)
- Wijkbudgetten worden vaak gebruikt (erkent dat het niet geheel makkelijk online te vinden is)
- Goede samenwerking met andere afdelingen
  - Co-productie idee, zeker bij leergang
- Nu een “wij” concept binnen Almere; vroeger per stadsdeel eigen budget, eigen alles
- Bestuur heeft wel groot ingezet op jeugd, grootste bevolkingsdeel
- Maken wel gebruik van een interne poll; gaf aan dat zoiets op de website ook handig kan zijn
- Nog niet klaar voor een forum
  - Qua capaciteit en wie leidt het enz.

Gemeente Amersfoort

**Functie geinterviewde personen:** Hoofd Communicatie – Sector Welzijn Sociale Zekerheid en Onderwijs & Hoofd Communicatie – Sector Stedelijke Ontwikkeling en Beheer

- Elke sector heeft een eigen communicatieafdeling
- Maken heldere afspraken met burgers over hoeveel invloed en feedback
- Doel iger om verder te gaan in burgerparticipatie
- Binnenkort workshop voor Web 2.0
- Zoekfunctie website verbeteren
- Geen beleidsdoelstellingen, wel eigen ambtelijke doelstellingen (informeel)
- Veel bezig met experimenten
- Veel participatie in Amersfoort, internet speelt daar een belangrijke rol in
  - Wel afhankelijk van vooruitstrevende projectleiders en eigen initiatieven
- Nog niet helemaal op meebeslissings niveau, ook vanuit de raad: hoeft (nog) niet zo ver
- Kan vaak op een eenvoudige manier: verschillende keuzes -> burgers stemmen
- Vaker ingezet voor specifieke issues / wel veel inzet vereist
- Wens is sterk uit de raad / erkennen ook de kloof tussen burger en overheid
  - Maar tot een punt, burger heeft eigen verantwoordelijkheid hierbij
  - Gemeente moet zorgen voor transparantie/openheid/voldoende informatie
  - Extra stap is misschien wel nodzakelijk wanneer het om sociale cohesie gaat
• Stagiair deed onderzoek bij gemeente: waarom doen mensen niet mee?
  o Zien ze het belang wel?
  o Algemeen belang vs. individuele belang
• Plus punten: elke mening telt evenveel
• Kan zowel inhoudelijke discussie bevatten als simpel stemmen
• Vaak op wijkniveau is samenwerken/cohesie meer van toepassing -> normale participatie via face-to-face
  o Maar ondersteunend kan e-wel
• Creatieve Stad project (spel simulatie)
• Gemeente hoeft niet altijd alles zelf te doen, eigenaarschap hoeft niet
  o Op dit moment ook geforceerd omdat het CMS het niet toelaat
• Chat experiment gedaan met burgermeester
  o Veel focus op controle behouden, politiek correct enz.
  o Beter om dat los te laten
• Informeren is geen echte participatie / moet eigenlijk altijd
  o Requirement
• Verder gaan in burgerparticipatie is een politieke doelstelling
  o Meer co-produceren en adviseren
• Duidelijk dat e-participatie nog aan het begin staat
  o Wel veel normale burgerparticipatie al (ook vaak bij ontwerp en uitvoering)
  o Aangenaam verrast dat op de gem. website toch meer bestaat
  o Ligt mogelijk aan het feit dat het aanwezig is en er is activiteit, maar wordt nog niet volledig inhoudelijk ingezet.
  o Belangrijk te weten dat iedereen nog wel aan het begin staat
• Mogelijkheden van ICT zijn beperkend / moeten er omheen werken
  o ICT gericht op veilig/robust, enz.
  o Willen geen risico’s nemen bij experimenten enz.
• Veel inzet participatie
  o Nog niet veel e-part.
  o Eerst normale participatie leren/verbeteren dan steeds meer digitaal erbij
  o Vooral in projecten
• Training: bewust maken van wat kan (web 2.0)
  o Drempel: besef dat je om ICT heen kunt (moet)
  o Niet onnodig moeilijk maken (investeringen)
  o Gemeente deed actief bij virtueel wereld project Vathors, waren niet eigenaar
• Nu bezig met visie op internet neerzetten
  o Hoe inzetten, op aanbod of vraag gestructureerd enz.
  o Nog vrij complex, veel keuzes
• Training: keuzes wanneer participatie binnen beleid enz.
• Goed niveau feedback met burgers
  o Eerder onderzoek gaf aan dat dit slecht was dus nu veel verbetering na inzet
• Staan op het punt om nieuwe investeringen in te plannen
• Alles decentraal ingericht dus een afdeling heeft 1.5 webredacteur in huis en een andere afdeling bijvoorbeeld helemaal niet.
  o Gaan proberen het via projectbudgetten te financieren meer
  o E-participatie zit gewoon in de verdeling van project communicatie, enz.
  o In het algemeen voldoende middelen
• Website begon met doel transparantie, alle informatie daar te vinden (raadstukken enz.)
  o Communicatie is ook gedreven om via internet informatie beschikbaar te stellen
  o Maar ICT helemaal niet, vormt drempel
    ▪ Zij zijn gericht op basisregistraties en privacy, enz.
• Communicatie heeft adviserende rol bij content plaatsen
• Kunnen zelf niet eens Youtube bekijken intern, geldt voor vele dingen
• Wel net gestart met interne twitter Yammer
  o Veel inhoudelijke berichten / expertise aanvragen / actief
• Rijk steunde dienstverlening erg veel, zo werd ook succes geboekt
  o Nu binnen Rijk is e-participatie wel groeiend, maar nog aan het begin
• Hebben gewoon een standaard email protocol, SMS Kruiskamp is ook vrij duidelijk in waar respons heen gaat.
• Vragen bij internetpanel komen zowel vanuit Onderzoek & Statistiek als ambtenaren die iets willen weten
  o Zij maken een rapport en geven het door als onderdeel van een voorstel bijvoorbeeld.
• Gebruik van Flickr heeft wel kleine drempel dat je Yahoo account nodig hebt
  o Picasa was technisch moeilijker (zelfde drempel, ff onderzoeken)
• Actuele vraag: hoe interactief mogen wij twitteren
  o Scheiding tussen politiek en ambtelijk deel
  o Politiek zegt tegen ambtelijk deel: mond houden
  o Ook discussie op Ambtenaar 2.0
• Jongeren onder 18 toch wel belangrijk bij bepaalde project
  o 1/3e bevolking Amersfoort onder 24
• Veel focus op jongeren, niet zoveel op ouderen
  o Ouderen zijn makkelijk georganiseerd via huidige methoden
  o Maar jongeren nog slecht bereikt
• Bezig met ontwikkeling RSS, “duurt wel erg lang”
• Wethouders hebben eigen blog, niet op eigen site. Vaak politiek gericht
• Experiment: project-niveau forum: bleef erg stil, maar geven aan “niet goed ons best gedaan” qua reclame en vragen stellen enz.

• Amersfoort LinkedIn groep van burgers, niet zelf beginnen als het al bestaat
  o Daar niet actief bezig als gemeente, ambtenaren persoonlijk wel (niet vanuit positie)
  o Kan reflex soms zijn om “tegen” de overheid te praten wanneer ze dan actief meedoen
  o Us against them

Gemeente Reeuwijk
Functie geinterviewde personen: Algemeen Directeur & Hoofd Communicatie

• Noodzak eParticipatie: met de tijd meegaan, aansluiten bij doelgroepen
  o De middelen zijn beschikbaar, en burgers zijn zulke dingen gewend

• Plus punten: snelheid, tijd en plaats onafhankelijke
  o Maar: kan vluchtig zijn
  o Normale manier: iets meer tijd en aandacht voor inhoud/nuance

• Poll op gemeentelijke website: afgetekende groep, weten niet precies wie dat allemaal zijn

• Forum – vaak moeilijk te controleren (duidelijk dat alle mogelijkheden nog niet bekend zijn)

• Vaak vluchtig, maar hoeft niet; wel veel inzet nodig

• Kloof tussen burger en politiek bestaat op zich wel
  o Kleinere gemeenten minder: iedereen kent elkaar
  o Maar: hoe erg is dat eigenlijk
  o De meeste mensen willen niet meedoen, nou en? Wij kunnen en moeten ze niet forceren

• Met de mensen die wel meedoen; neem je ze serieus, wat is de verhouding qua posities.

• Participatie is ook een middel, geen doel op zich; gevaar van “meer participatie” beweging
  o (en dus ook meetinstrument)

• Kom je bij de burger aan met een blanko vraag: Denk mee, wat wil je? -> Willen ze kaders hebben; Heb je al een plan dan vragen ze wat ze dan nog te zeggen hebben. Middenweg vinden is belangrijk.

• Ook mentaliteit is belangrijk bij organisatie gemeente: beperking vs. mogelijkheden opzoeken.
  o Medewerkers voelen zich experts, ze weten wat wel en niet kan…waarom de burger erbij?
  o Kennis zit ook bij de burgers, touwtjes moeten losgelaten worden; er is geen gevaar voor je positie, de gemeente heeft altijd een rol
  o Vaak klankbordgroepen van burgers bij projecten, zit ook veel kennis
    • Eist flexibiliteit

• Bodegraven-Reeuwijk gaan fuseren, al discussies geweest over participatie; blijken toch veel verschillen tussen politieke partijen over hoe en hoeveel; ene zegt wij zijn ingestemd dus het is goed, andere zegt laat ze meedenken
  o Maar, niemand kan eigenlijk zeggen dat ze geen participatie willen, maar sommige denken het wel

• Overheid monitor is eigenlijk waardeloos, zegt niks over relevantie/effectiviteit/doelen enz.

• Hoe relevant zijn de verschillende vormen van media; het is een afweging tussen doelen/uitkomsten/middelen enz.
Vaak participatie rondom planvorming (bestemmingsplannen enz.) of bij een specifieke beleidsontwerp

Beeld van meetinstrument over Reeuwijk klopt wel.

Idee om DigiD aspect mee te nemen

Wel sprake van offline participatie, vaak wijkteams, klankbordgroepen

Nu bezig met vormen van participatiebeleid
  o Politiek heeft verschillende ideeën

Politiek kan alles willen
  o Maar organisatie moet het kunnen
  o Training zal dus nodig zijn, nog niet op dat punt

Nu vooral definitievorming, alles is open en kan mee, wordt dan omgezet in beleid

Verandering in website kan komende 2 jaar niet, bezuinigingen en fusie
  o Fusie blokkeert veel

Gemeente geeft in het algemeen goede feedback
  o Wel verschil tussen grote projecten die erg in het licht staan vs. andere
  o Vaak als gemeente het zelf moeilijk heeft over wat te doen -> feedback geven wordt moeilijk
    ▪ zou wel moeten, zelfs in zulke omstandigheden

Bij de poll – raad is verantwoordelijk voor inhoud
  o Communicatie is faciliterend

Communicatie is niet altijd volgend, maar ook niet altijd adviserend
  o Beetje tussenin

Wethouders zijn nu wel gevoelig voor participatie
  o Wel kennisachterstand, actief meedoen in een blog ofzo zal ook waarsch. niet kunnen
  o Zit wel een verantwoording aspect bij: doe niks zonder dat je weet dat de burgers er achter staan

Participatie vanuit burgers qua leeftijd en ST rollen is onderwerp afhankelijk

55+ toch veel meer gebruik van internet tegenwoordig
  o Hele grote categorie eigenlijk
  o Spreek eerder over 55/65/75/85…
  o Zal ook verschuiven

Belangrijk om te weten wat de gemeente precies wil (doelstelling); wat is effectief, wanneer is iets succesvol?

Er is praat geweest over een nieuwsbrief, zag eigenlijk het nut ervan niet in

Afhankelijk van kwaliteit webmaster, vaak in kleinere gemeente zijn personeel en techniek op een niveau lager.