

## Panel 7: Innovations of democratic governance: for the better or for the worse?

Chaired by: Bas Denters (Twente University) and Anchrit Wille (Leiden University).

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### Panel theme

Over the last two or three decades the nature of democratic governance in Western political systems has been radically transformed. Increasingly Western democracies have responded to pressures to reform and adapt “the democratic process in response to [...] changing social and political conditions” (Dalton c.s. 2003: 251). First, recent changes reflect the rise of new forms of democratic participation. Increased demands for forms of more direct citizen involvement in addition to traditional forms of electoral participation (e.g. Inglehart 1977; Klingemann & Fuchs 1995; Norris 2002, Dalton 1988) reflect a shift to new value orientations and a questioning of the quality and efficacy of representative democracy among Western publics.

Second, the transformation of the public sector in combination with the use of arrangements that involve civil society actors through networks reflect a shift from government to governance. Much of contemporary politics takes place outside the context of the state-centered institutions. In addition, public service delivery has been becoming increasingly complex leading to the need to rethink traditional recipes for democratic control and accountability. Conventional parliamentary accountability arrangements are incapable of monitoring the delivery of public services effectively (Peters 2008). Alternatively, the public sector has developed a set of instruments that can be used to complement some aspects of traditional accountability. Performance management has enabled the public to assess the performance of the public sector and to place pressures on the poorly performing elements of the public sector. There has been a rise in alternative forms of citizen participation on the output side of the public sector-- such as school boards, client-panels and user-monitors—that plays important role in the increased monitoring of the performance of individual facilities—schools, hospitals social services etc. and with that an increased public mobilization around the performance of these facilities. Against this backdrop we may be witnessing what Mark Warren (2003) has termed a “second transformation of democracy”; a transformation from government to governance that is characterized by an expansion of the structure of opportunities for public participation of citizens in addition to traditional government oriented modes of electoral participation and representation.

In this panel we focused on forms of innovation of the institutional infrastructure of contemporary democracy that have empowered individual citizens and citizen groups to participate directly in public sector decision-making. These forms of direct involvement may pertain to public decision-making in the context of governments, but also in other public domains (e.g. quango's, school boards, social service organizations and housing associations), and at different levels and domains of governance: national, regional and local, but also in the neighborhood and other areas of everyday life. The scope of citizen influence in these new arenas may differ, from information, via consultation and co-decision to full delegation of decision powers. Moreover, the modes of participation can also vary from voting in initiatives and referendums, citizen juries and forums, forms of interactive and participatory governance etc. and may or may not use new information and communication technology; and may concentrate on the input or output side of the public sector.

The central question we wanted to address in our panel was: What are the effects of the introduction of such democratic innovations on the quality of democratic governance? Although such innovations of democratic governance are often considered as a promising way of dealing with the challenges outlined before, these initiatives may also have a number of potential drawbacks. An important point in this respect is the issue of selective participation. It is well known that due to differences in, among other things, possession of politically relevant resources and or ethnical or cultural backgrounds, certain categories of citizens are more politically active than others. This political inequality between different groups of the population can lead to significant distortions of the political agenda (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Brady and Scholzman 1995; Fiorina 1999).

Other points of concern are: has democratic innovation improved the quality of policy and decision-making? Or does intensive citizen participation occur at the expense of the effectiveness of the policy being conducted. Some are concerned, for example, about an insufficiency of content-related expertise that would in turn pose a potential threat to the content-related quality of decisions and to administrative effectiveness. Finally, there is also the question as to how forms of direct citizen participation relate to the basic principle of a representative democracy. Does an increased opportunity for public participation at the output side of the public sector mean that the nature of democracy may be shifting away from concern with political inputs into decision-making toward more direct control over public policy?

### Relation to NIG program

This panel is directly related to the NIG sub-theme Citizens and Governance. This part of the program deals with issues concerning citizen consultation and participation in the public domain (including issues of e-participation).

This is of prime importance to understand the development of relationships of citizens with those organizations that govern the public sphere. This panel was organized as a follow up to a symposium that was organized during the Annual Meeting of the Dutch Political Science Association in Berg en Dal as part of the Democratic Audit.

### **Papers**

We welcomed papers that provided an analysis of effects of particular democratic innovations (in the sense described above) on the quality of democratic governance. Both theoretical papers and empirical analyses were welcome. We welcomed participation by both junior NIG members (PhD students and RM students) and senior NIG staff.