Exploring the relationship between participatory engineering and political representation – the case of local political representatives in Sweden

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Abstract The health of political parties and the institutions of representative democracy have during the last decade been extensively questioned due to evidence of a widespread decline in voting turnouts, political trust, party membership and identification. An often proposed strategy to strengthen representative democracy is for political institutions to offer alternative forms of political participation, so called participatory engineering. This paper explores the relationship between participatory engineering in Swedish municipalities and the culture of representation adopted among local elected representatives, by analyzing a survey of local political representatives. The study is based on a comparative case selection made to include representatives from those municipalities where the least and the most participatory engineering projects have been carried out. The study reveals a complex relationship between participatory engineering and political representation. The representatives with most experience of participatory engineering in their municipality display more positive attitudes towards citizen participation and practice more communication with citizens in their political representation. Still the distribution of roles of representation follow the same pattern among representatives with much experience of participatory engineering as those with little experience indicating continuity in the culture of representation. The results can be understood as an illustration of the prevailing tradition of strong political parties in Sweden, and contribute to the understanding of the outcomes of projects of participatory engineering. This study suggests that the assumed relationship between participatory engineering and democratic gods such as increased political interest, -knowledge, -efficacy, and participation among citizens must be investigated with reference to a possible hesitance among elected representatives to adapt citizen participation to their culture of representation.

Key words: Participatory engineering, local democracy, political representation, political communication

Introduction

Can, alternative top-initiated forms of political participation, so called participatory engineering reinvigorate local democracy and create meaningful instruments for citizen participation? The answers to this question has often been, “it depends”; and one of the depending factor is not seldom imputed to be the level of engagement by local politicians (Klijn & Koopenjan 2000, 2000).

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2 “This concept indicates purposive attempts on the part of political elites to affect political participation positively via the reform of the institutions of democracy” (Zittel 2007:9). Related concepts are democratic innovations (Smith 2009), democratization policy (Montin 2007) and participatory governance (Fung 2003).

In light of these considerations, one important research task is to explore the rationale among politicians for engaging in participatory engineering projects and the adaptability of such projects to the structure of representative democracy. This paper sets out to contribute to this task by way of exploring the relationship between participatory engineering and the attitudes towards citizen participation, their communication with citizens as well as the modes of representation adopted among elected representatives. The aim for the paper is to explore the culture of representation emergent among representatives in political contexts where participatory engineering is a frequently implemented.

The results from the analysis carried out in this paper underline the fruitfulness and importance of focusing on roles of representation when studying participatory engineering projects. Positive attitudes towards citizen participation and communicative forms of representation are proven to be more emergent among local political representatives with much experience of participatory engineering. On the other hand, the distribution of roles of representation is very much the same among these representatives as representatives with little experience of participatory engineering. This combination of results create an image of political representatives that are positive to citizen participation and more communicative towards citizens but doesn't (more than other representatives) express that they take the will of citizens into account when making decisions. In the concluding discussion of this paper the normative implications of these results are discussed as two possible interpretations of these results are presented.

The paper is distributed as follows; first the subject of the paper is discussed more thoroughly as the link between participatory engineering and political representation is discussed in relation to the alleged crisis of political parties and prior research of participatory engineering. The next coming section deals with the Swedish political context characterized by a tradition of strong party structure. Thereafter the framework of the study is presented followed by the empirical analysis. The empirical analysis is then summarized and analyzed in the concluding discussion.
Participatory engineering and political representation

One reoccurring theme in political science in recent years has been the condition of institutions of representative democracy in the light of what has been called a crisis of political parties. The central role of political parties in representative democracy to create an institutional linkage between citizens and governmental institutions is, says some scholars, losing legitimacy as less and less citizens express trust towards, identify with and join as members in political parties (Hayward 1995, Shields 2005, Mainwaring 2006).

Sweden is no exception although often looked at as an ideal democracy with strong political parties and a high degree of political participation between elections (Möller & Gidlund 1999, Gilljam 2003, Karlsson 2003). Voting turnouts has gradually dropped during the last two decades (Ds 2003:54), as well as the public trust in politicians and political institutions (Holmberg 1999a:105). Swedish political parties have lost a majority of their members and have increasing troubles to employ political posts at the local level (Åström 2004:20). Overall, membership and participation in associational life have decreased (Montin 2007:187). The perhaps most troubling trend for the political parties is the decrease in party identification among Swedish citizens (Berglund et al. 2005:108f, Holmberg 1999:110), in the light of this decline the basis for a party centered form of representative democracy is shaking.

Paradoxically these trends converge with an overall increase in political engagement and interest among the Swedish citizens (Åström 2004:20f, SOU 2000:1, Amnå 2008). Voices has therefore been raised to name the crisis for what it “really is”, a crisis for traditional political channels, meaning that citizens not as much have turned their backs on democracy and politics but on the traditional models for citizen participation (Nilsson 2005:73). In line with this analysis, there has among Swedish local governments, as in most other western democracies, emerged a trend of top-initiated forms of political participation, so called participatory engineering projects. The idea behind this participatory engineering is imputed to be to stimulate citizens to participate in politics in new forms that are more adapted to an individualized citizenry (SALAR 2009:7 Governmental bill 2001/02:80).

The projects of participatory engineering have been focused on creating greater opportunities for civic participation, increasing the transparency of local politics and to some extent, more inclusive decision-making. This has been attained with renewed and expanded dissemination of information to citizens, renewal of old institutions, creation of some new elements in the political organization and new ways of communication and political influence for citizens (Bengtsson 2008:173-202, Olsson & Montin 1999:5ff.,
Wide & Gustavsson 2001:61ff., Montin 1998:10). Among the most common projects of participatory engineering in Swedish municipalities are various kinds of consultative citizens councils (e.g. senior citizens council), different renewal strategies to make the representative democracy more accessible for the citizens (e.g. locating meetings of the municipal assembly to rural parts of the municipality, or broadcasting the meetings in local radio or online ), and user boards related to various governmental services (Gilljam, Jodal & Cliffordsson 2003:26).

These forms of participation are by scholars often linked to the ideals of participatory democracy and understood as attempts to link citizen’s values, opinions and knowledge to the political decision-making process, not in an attempt to replace but rather to reinvigorate, reconnect and strengthen the institutions of representative democracy (Fung 2004, Gibson & Ward 2000, Gilljam & Jodal 2005, Åström 2004). Extensive empirical investigations of participatory engineering projects have been conducted, often in the form of effect studies where results are anticipated on the attitudes of citizens or in some cases on the entire community. The results often show lacking effects on “democratic goods” such as increasing political support, long-term participation, party membership and voting turnouts. Participatory engineering has shown to result in increasing conflicts between citizens and political elites (Akkerman, Hajer & Grin 2004, Montin 2009); failed to show signs of increasing manifest forms of political participation and increasing democratic values among citizens (Gilljam & Jodal 2006); and to conduct ineffective ways for decision-making (Irvin & Stansbury 2004).

One all too often overlooked link in the chain between participatory engineering and its anticipated effects on the citizens in a community, are the political representatives. Being the actors that initiate projects of public participation and having the political power to shape the citizens input into political decisions, political representatives can be viewed as the gate-keepers of participatory engineering. At the same time as new forms of public participation is suggested as one solution to the problems facing political representatives, adapting participatory politics to the institutions of representative democracy produce substantial demands on political representatives. New forms of public participation can imply that political representatives are held accountable for their political actions also between elections; some projects also involve decision-making processes that bypass traditional representative institutions (Koopenjan 2004).
The reaction and behavior of political representatives in participatory engineering are not certain. The actual influence of these projects on local politics has been shown to be dependent on the good will, or democratic intentions of elected representatives (Nilsson 2005:169, Åström 2004:94, Åström & Granberg 2007). Based on the often drawn conclusion that political participation must be in some way rewarding, in order to create the values connected to it in theory (Svensson 2008, Teorell 2007); the gate-keeper function of political representatives makes a key object for empirical analysis in order to understand the functioning of participatory engineering in mending the problems for representative democracy. It can be argued that participatory engineering can be supporting for local democracy only to the extent that it fits with the institutions of representative democracy. If participatory projects are not adopted to fit the needs and wishes of politicians, or politicians are not adapting their style of representation to fit these forms of participation, participatory engineering can be expected to have little importance in the overall picture of local democracy and decision-making.

In this paper the attitudes and role taking is compared between political representatives with extensive experience of participatory engineering and representatives without such experiences; this in order to explore the relationship between participative engineering and political representation. The aim of the study is to investigate what “culture of representation” emerges in municipalities where extensive participatory engineering has been implemented. If this culture displays a characteristics that are well fitting with extensive citizen participation in relation to the decision making process the outlook for participatory engineering to become integrated instruments in local democracy can be said to be promising. If, on the other hand, a misfit is apparent between the culture of representation and the functions of participatory engineering, the future is bleaker for participatory engineering.

Participatory engineering and the Swedish political context

The Swedish political context, characterized by strong political parties with a central position in the representative democratic system, is an interesting setting for democracy renewal via participatory engineering. Political parties are the central institutions for organizing the local political representation in Sweden, the candidates for elections are nominated by the political parties and all representatives in the local assembly as well as in the committees are organized in party groups. Therefore the local party organizations (especially in the larger parties) are influential in organizing the policy-making and controlling the political positions among its representatives (Montin 2005).
Also political participation has in Sweden traditionally been channeled through the political parties and popular mass movements, fostering a collectivist ideal for citizen participation and democratic citizenship. Newer forms of individualized participation, in which citizens take part in politics without coordinating their views with a political party or organization (e.g. user boards and citizen councils), poses a sharp contrast to this tradition. The emergence of new forms of participation in Swedish democracy has been called a transition from a society centered to an individualized view on democracy (Klasson 2000:36, Dahlstedt 2009:32, Olsen 1988). The reactions to this developments have been harsh not at least from political scientists stating that it constitute a serious threat to political equality (Gilljam 2003) and potentially undermines the role of political parties in Swedish democracy (Rothstein 2004:304).

**Participatory engineering in Sweden**

The preconditions can hence be described as unfavorable for participatory engineering in Sweden. Some go as far as speaking of an ideological opposition towards extensive public participation in the history of Swedish democracy (Montin 2007:198). Despite this, the critical condition for political parties and representative democracy (described above) led Swedish democracy in on the, perhaps unexpected, track of participatory politics. The development took off during the 1990s when several governmental committees where given the task to investigate the future of Swedish democracy (Montin 2007:189f), the most influential of which where the Swedish commission on democracy (SOU 2000:1, Amnå 2006). This was a parliamentary commission reviewing the condition of Swedish democracy that formed the basis for a governmental proposal on democracy bill (Government bill 2001/02:80).

These commissions and their political reactions started a phase of renewal of Swedish democracy where participatory and deliberative features where more evident (Gilljam & Jodal 2005, Nilsson 2005, Svensson 2008, Dahlsted 2009). Critical accounts have been made that this renewal only included political rhetoric and new powerless participatory features as the political parties themselves were much left untouched by the commissions as well as their outcomes (Nilsson 2005). For example the assignment from the Swedish government to the Swedish commission on democracy did not include an investigation and proposition for changes of the political parties (Amnå 2006:600).
Overall, the implementation of participatory engineering in representative democracy in Sweden can be characterized by a separation of traditional party democracy and new features of participatory and deliberative practices (Montin 2007:198f, Amnå 2006, Nilsson 2005:170, Åström & Granberg 2007, Åström & Montin 2005). Amnå characterizes this process as the political parties giving “a ‘yes’ to participation and deliberation, but a ‘no’ to any seizure of their power” (Amnå 2006:602). One observed effect of this division is that participation in local democracy, although rhetorically addressed in terms of participatory and deliberative democracy can exclusively concern the output side of local political system, when participatory practices exclusively involve interaction between citizens and civil servants, excluding political representatives (Åström & Montin 2005:19ff.).

What we can conclude from this section is that the effects of participatory engineering on political representatives are in no way certain in the Swedish context which doesn’t constitute an obvious setting for democracy renewal through citizen participation. The strong position of political parties and the separation of participatory engineering from party politics create circumstances that possibly hinder progress towards an interconnection of extensive citizen participation in representative democracy.

Theoretical framework – The relationship between participation and representation

Although very few theorists nowadays argue to abolish representative institutions or to obstruct political participation, the questions of how the concepts of representation and participation should be related to and weighted against each other is well debated in contemporary democratic theory (see for example Held 1987/2005, Knight et al. 2002, Beetham et al 2002, Fung 2004). One line of argument recognize inherent inequality in representative democracy as its starting point, and sees political participation as well as its possible effects of reconfiguring political representation as a way to make representative democracy more justifiable (Pateman 1970:43, Barber 1984:150ff, McLaverty & Morris 2007). An opposing position regards some forms of political participation as possibly posing threats to the system of political representation and rather explores how political participation can be made justifiable and nonthreatening in relation to political representation (Verba 1996, Miller 1983).

From these two positions about the relationship between participation and representation, two propositions about the the state of political representation in relation to increased citizen participation (as in implementation of participatory engineering), can be translated. The more optimistic view of
political participation as a way to equalize and justify representative democracy corresponds with the proposition that participatory engineering can change the culture among political representatives in a more communicative direction promoting a widespread citizen participation and loosening the ties to political parties (Åström 2004, Coleman 2005a, Wohlgemuth 2006). The opposing view underlining the threat from citizen participation can be translated to a proposition of continuity in the culture political representation, as citizen participation is implemented and steered by political elites in order to preserve rather than to change the institutions of political representation (Blaug 2002). The two propositions will be explained further below.

Continuity

Ricardo Blaug proposes that the traditional forms of democracy and political representation will prevail and subordinate most attempts for reformation in a more participatory direction (Blaug 2002:105ff). No cumulative effects of such reforms will be able to alter “politics as usual”. Blaug illustrates this as a struggle between incumbent and radical democracy where all top-initiated reforms of democracy is understood as attempts from incumbent democratic institutions to conserve its current power by co-opting radical forces. Participatory engineering can in this way be understood as a way for the institutions of representative democracy to subordinate radical forces demanding participatory democracy. Even tough political representatives may express positive attitudes towards participatory engineering as well as increased citizen participation in general, their view of democracy and political representation remain untouched. In the Swedish context, characterized by a strongly party oriented representative democracy, continuity means that political representation will continue to mainly be organized by and channeled through the political parties.

Change

This proposition builds on the idea that the active participation of citizen can alter the way that political representatives go about representing their voters as citizen participation creates strategic benefits of investigating and responding to public opinion (Zittel 2009:8, Karlsson 2009, Wohlgemuth 2006:160). Therefore it is proposed that substantial participatory engineering might be connected to a culture of representation where ongoing two-way communication between citizens and representatives is a central
theme in the relationship of representation (Coleman 2005a, 2005b, Coleman & Blumler 2009). Interactivity demands a more individualistic and unbound view of representation where political parties are given a different role. In order for interactions to be able to shape the political content there must be a leeway for individual representatives to formulate their policy positions outside of a compelling party plan. The party ideology must therefore in this view of representation rather perform the function of a framework for discussion then the base for a bounding list of electoral pledges (Lewin 1970).

This culture of representation is characterized by an individualization of political representation focused on communication and interaction with citizens (vertical communication), where political parties are given a less dogmatic function. Vertical communication preform central functions in this culture of representation. Through interaction representatives can inquire with the citizens they are representing about their views, knowledge and wishes in connection to current policy issues. This way their policy positions can be elaborated on in cooperation with the represented (Coleman 2005a:189). The communicative relationship also functions for the creation of accountability by way of representatives “giving accounts” to the represented (Coleman 2005a:190). Through interactions with voters representatives must account for how their political actions are in connection with the interests of their voters (Coleman 2005a, following the view on representation presented by Pitkin 1967). Hence, this more interactive form of representation entails interactions both in order to inquire with-, as well as giving accounts to voters and requires some leeway for the individual representative to shape his/her policy position in relation to these interactions.

Operational definitions

The propositions of continuity and change presented above represent what can be described as opposing views of the relationship between participatory engineering and political representation. The first proposition underlines the salience of incumbent institutions while the latter point towards the emergence of a different culture of representation. In order to empirically investigate these propositions a comparative study will be conducted. The attitudes and role taking of political representatives in

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3 In Coleman & Blumlers terms this concept is called direct representation

4 It is important to note how this form of accountability does not restrain representatives to act in accordance with the expressed will of their constituents but only to account for how their actions are in harmony with the interest of their constituents (Pitkin 1967:209f.).
municipalities where extensive participatory engineering has been implemented will be compared with representatives in municipalities where few or no projects have been carried out. The differences between these two groups of respondents will be interpreted as dependent on a culture connected to the implementation of participatory engineering.\(^5\)

Each proposition is operationalized in a way so that they can be confirmed or rejected in connection to a comparison of the two case groups. In relation to the description of the two perspectives, three dimensions of what is here termed the culture of representation will be analyzed. First the attitudes among political representatives towards citizen participation will be compared. Secondly the vertical communication of the representatives will be investigated in order to assess whether the experience of participatory engineering is correlated with a more communicative form of representation. Lastly the distribution of roles of representation will be compared between the two case groups in an attempt to address the question whether participatory engineering is altering the way that political representatives come to their decisions. These dimensions of the investigation are summarized in table 1 and operationalizations of the two contrasted propositions are presented for each factor.

**Table 1: Operationalization of the propositions, continuity and change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition</th>
<th>Overall characteristics</th>
<th>Attitudes towards participation</th>
<th>Vertical communication</th>
<th>Roles of representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuity</td>
<td>Subordination and co-option of reform strategies to incumbent views of democracy and representation.</td>
<td>Similar attitudes towards citizen participation in pioneer and hesitator municipalities.</td>
<td>Similar vertical communication in pioneer and hesitator municipalities.</td>
<td>Similar distribution of roles of representation in pioneer and hesitator municipalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Participatory engineering supports and is supported by a different culture of representation.</td>
<td>More positive attitudes towards citizen participation in pioneer than in hesitator municipalities</td>
<td>More frequent and valued vertical communication in pioneer than in hesitator municipalities</td>
<td>Dissimilar distribution of roles of representation in pioneer and hesitator municipalities. Pioneers show less party dependence in their representation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^5\) No proposition is made about the causal direction between this culture and the implementation of participatory engineering. The projects of participatory engineering could be implemented as a result of a local culture approving of citizen participation. Another possibility is that the implementation of such projects have altered the views of the representatives and created this culture.
Research design and methodological considerations

In order to investigate the relationship between participatory engineering and political representation, a quantitative comparative study has been conducted of elected representatives in six Swedish municipalities. The case selection include three of those municipalities in which the most extensive amount of participative engineering projects among Swedish municipalities have been carried out and equally many belonging to the group where the least amount of projects have been implemented. Following theories and research on the diffusion of innovation these two categories are named pioneers and hesitators given that they represent the extremes regarding their implementation of participatory engineering (Schmidt 1986). Left out in this study are the vast majority of Swedish municipalities that have implemented some, but not extensive, participatory engineering projects, who in terms of diffusion theory would be called followers. The design of the study is made for the interest of finding differences between the extremes. If no such differences are found it is not probable that any specific culture of representation connected to participatory engineering would be found among political representatives in the follower municipalities either. The cases have also been selected in accordance with a “most similar strategy” (Przeworski & Teune 1970:32) attempting to maximize the difference between the case groups regarding the studied variable (participatory engineering) but at the same time create two comparative groups with regard to other important factors; in this case size and level of urbanity. These factors have in prior research shown to have an impact on the implementation of participatory engineering in Swedish local democracy (Gilljam, Jodal & Cliffordsson 2004).

The empirical investigation was conducted through an e-mail and mail survey to all members of the local parliament in the six municipalities in the spring of 2008 (Feb-May). The response rate was varying between 54 and 77% in the different municipalities and reached an (acceptable) average of 60,5% involving a to a total of 190 respondents. The sample of respondents is representative in comparison to all members of the local parliaments in Sweden regarding gender, and age. The sample does on the other hand show a considerable under representation of politicians with a high school degree as their highest level of education (~9,5%). Except for a significant under representation of members of the Swedish moderate party (~7,6%), the party representation of the sample is satisfactory.

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6 According to a study carried out in 2002, Gilljam, Jodal & Cliffordsson 2003.

7 The under-representation of members of the moderate party in study can mostly be traced to one single municipality in which a group of moderates feared that the study could harm the party and advised their party members not to fill in the questionnaire. This situation contributed to the decision to guarantee anonymity not only
**Empirical analysis**

The empirical analysis of this paper will be based on the comparison of representatives from pioneer municipalities (pioneers) and representatives from hesitator municipalities (hesitators). In order to investigate the culture of representation in these two groups, the three dimensions of this culture included in the operationalization (table 1) will be analyzed separately. First, the two groups will be compared regarding their attitudes towards citizen participation in local democracy. With this analysis we can assess whether or not it emerges a culture among political representatives that is more permissive towards citizen participation, in connection to the implementation of participatory engineering projects. The next empirical section focuses on the vertical communication between citizens and representatives. Here we try to assess whether experiences of participatory engineering are correlated with a more communicative style of representation. In the third section of the empirical analysis, we will investigate the possibilities of a difference in the actual role orientation of political representatives related to the experience of participatory engineering. The two contrasting propositions of *continuity* and *change* are addressed in these three empirical sections, as comparisons are made between pioneer- and hesitator representatives, in relation to the three themes.

**Attitudes toward participation**

The greater emergence of participatory engineering projects in the pioneer cases could be expected to be the result of as well as supporting more positive attitudes towards public participation among the local politicians. The results of this analysis shows, regarding attitudes towards citizen participation, a discrepancy between attitudes towards participation as an abstract idea and attitudes towards concrete forms of public participation. Most of the respondents (85.6%) expressed positive attitudes towards the general idea that *citizens must participate more actively and be given a more active role in local politics.*

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8 Respondents were asked to answer whether they agreed or disagreed to this statement on a ten point scale where 10 was marked “I fully agree” and 1 “I fully disagree”. All answers higher than five was defined as positive attitudes.
The results even show a slightly higher circulation of positive attitudes among representatives in the hesitant municipalities than in pioneer municipalities (+5.6%). This result is contra intuitive when related to the proposition that more positive attitudes towards participation should co-vary with the implementation of participatory engineering projects. The picture, although, changes drastically when attitudes towards specific forms of political participation are investigated.

**Table 2: Linear regression analysis: Attitudes towards specific forms of citizen participation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Citizen participation (in general)</th>
<th>Engage in political parties</th>
<th>Discuss political issues</th>
<th>Consultative referendums</th>
<th>Citizen panels</th>
<th>Citizen initiatives</th>
<th>Opinion polls</th>
<th>User boards</th>
<th>Choosing welfare service deliverers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pioneer</strong></td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="" /> -0.027</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="" /> 0.044</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="" /> 0.076</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="" /> 0.152*</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="" /> 0.234**</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="" /> 0.370**</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="" /> 0.149</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="" /> 0.238**</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="" /> 0.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political orientation (left)</strong></td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="" /> 0.118</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="" /> -0.089</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="" /> -0.119</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="" /> -0.082</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="" /> -0.047</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="" /> 0.088</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="" /> -0.051</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="" /> 0.023</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/15" alt="" /> 0.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>185</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R Square</strong></td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.134</td>
<td>0.193</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>0.488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjuster R Square</strong></td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.115</td>
<td>0.175</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments: *The categories are based on one survey question each in the form of a statement e. g. “Citizens should participate in local democracy by engaging in a political party” the respondents were asked to answer whether they agreed or disagreed to these statements on a ten point scale where 10 was marked “I fully agree” and 1 “I fully disagree”. **p>0.01, *p>0.05, Significant relationships are crossed.*

In table 2, a set of linear regression analyzes are displayed exploring the relationship between experience of participatory engineering and attitudes towards citizen participation in local democracy. Statistical controls are included for the age, gender and party orientation of the respondents. The analysis show a non-significant and weak, negative relationship between belonging to a pioneer municipality and expressing positive attitudes towards citizen participation in local democracy in general. Regarding positive attitudes towards the specific forms of citizen participation we find positive relationships with experience of participatory engineering in all models. Of all eight investigated categories of participation significant relationships are found in five.

\(^9\)Left: The Left party, the social democratic party and the greens; Right: The center party, the peoples party, the moderates and the Christian democratic party. No control is included for other party affiliations, e. g. local parties.
The categories where significant relationships are found with the experience of participatory engineering all regard forms of participation that allow citizens to express their opinions towards the local government in some way. These categories comply with common forms of participatory engineering such as user boards, citizen panels and citizen initiatives. Hence, the more positive attitudes among representatives from the pioneer municipalities seem directly connected to the experience of implementing participatory engineering in the municipality. The three categories of specific forms of participation, regarding which no significance is found in the relationships should as well be investigated closer. These variables gather categories of participation towards which almost all respondents express positive attitudes (Engage in political parties: 96,3% positive, Discuss political issues: 97,9% positive), as well as a form of participation towards which the attitudes go strongly along a ideological dimension. In the first case, there is not much variation to explain by the regression analysis\textsuperscript{10}, which is evident since no significant relationships are found in these models what so ever.

We can from this analysis conclude that support is found for the proposition that there is a positive relationship between experience of participatory engineering in the municipality and positive attitudes towards citizen participation. The experience of participatory engineering does anyhow not create an influence so strong that it overweight attitudes strongly connected to the party orientation. This is evident as no significant relationship is found between experience of participatory engineering and attitudes towards citizens participating by choosing between different deliverers of welfare services. When summarizing the results regarding attitudes towards political participation we can see a widespread positive attitude towards citizen participation in general in both hesitator- and pioneer municipalities. Beneath this pattern clear diverging tendencies anyhow emerge, political representatives in municipalities with a greater experience of participatory engineering are more positive towards specific forms of participation that entail that citizens voice their views to the local government and local politicians. When now approaching the next section of the analysis regarding vertical communication in political representation, we should have these results in mind.

*Vertical communication and interaction*

\textsuperscript{10} The mean variance in these two variables is: 1,57 in comparison with a mean of 7,41 in the other variables regarding specific categories of participation.
Participatory engineering can much be described as the design of opportunities for interaction between citizens and representatives or local government officials. Most forms of participatory engineering are consultative instruments in the decision-making process and lack direct influential power over political decisions- and outcomes. The interaction with and attention from representatives and officials are therefore in it self the value for the participation of citizens. Only to the extent that the knowledge, preferences and suggestions from participating citizens reach elected representatives can their efforts be expected to have an influence on policies. It is therefore imperative to understand the habits and attitudes regarding vertical communication and interaction among political representatives in connection to participatory engineering. In this section we therefore aim to investigate the question whether or not representatives are more interactive and communicate towards citizens in pioneer municipalities.

In table 3, a set of regression analyzes are presented. In the first model the reported frequency of communication with local citizens is analyzed. The analysis show that there is a significant positive relationship between representing a pioneer municipality and reporting a higher frequency of vertical communication. The second model explores reported satisfaction with citizen communication in the respondents municipalities. Here as well is a significant positive relationship found with representing a pioneer municipality. From these two models we can conclude that there is a positive relationship between experience of participatory engineering and frequent communication with citizens as well as satisfaction with they way vertical communication work in ones municipality, with control for gender, political orientation and age.
Table 3: Linear regression analysis: vertical communication and representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Index of vertical communication&lt;sup&gt;11&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Satisfaction vertical communication&lt;sup&gt;12&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Giving accounts&lt;sup&gt;13&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Inquiry&lt;sup&gt;14&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pioneer</td>
<td>246&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt; (.503)</td>
<td>.166&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt; (.278)</td>
<td>.158&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt; (.357)</td>
<td>.037 (.353)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (Man)</td>
<td>.076 (.518)</td>
<td>.059 (.286)</td>
<td>-.242 (.367)</td>
<td>-.097 (.363)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political orientation (left)</td>
<td>.048 (.503)</td>
<td>-.091 (.278)</td>
<td>.072 (.358)</td>
<td>.073 (.354)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (&lt;50 years old)</td>
<td>.062 (.528)</td>
<td>.004 (.291)</td>
<td>.005 (.374)</td>
<td>.043 (.370)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R Square</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>-.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments: **<p>0.01, *<p>0.05 Significant relationships are crossed.

The two remaining models in the table explore the respondents attitudes regarding the function of citizen interaction in political representation. The dependent variable in the first of these models regards whether the respondents find interacting with citizens imperative for creating accountability (by way of giving accounts, Coleman 2005a, Mansbridge 2009). In this model as well we find a statistically significant positive relation with representing a pioneer municipality. Also gender is statistically significant.

<sup>11</sup>The index for constituency communication is based on survey question “How often use the following channels in your role as a political representative to communicate with citizens?”. Thereafter the list of communication channels was presented. The respondents answered by marking never, seldom, sometimes or often in relation to each communication channel. The index is additive stretching from 0 to 24 and coded as follows: never=0, rarely=1, sometimes=2, often=3. The investigated communication channels are: party meeting, e-mail, mail, telephone, blog, online discussion- forum, debate article and workplace visit.

<sup>12</sup>Based on the following survey question, formulated as a statement: "The communication between elected officials and citizens work very well in my municipality today". Answers are given my marking a position on a scale from 1(Fully disagree) to 10(fully agree).

<sup>13</sup>Based on the following survey question, formulated as a statement: "A political representative must initiate discussion about important issues with voters in order to justify his/her choices and political positions". Answers are given my marking a position on a scale from 1(Fully disagree) to 10(fully agree).

<sup>14</sup>Based on the following survey question, formulated as a statement: "A political representative must initiate discussion of important issues with voters in order to make good decisions". Answers are given my marking a position on a scale from 1(Fully disagree) to 10(fully agree).

16
significant, meaning that more women than men find interactivity to be important for accountability in political representation. The last model regards the respondents' attitudes regarding function of citizen interaction as a way of inquiring with citizens before making decisions. In this model no significant relationships are found, meaning that experience of participatory engineering does not co-vary with such attitudes.

Conclusively, we can state that these analyses have shown some support for the proposition that participatory engineering and communication/interaction towards citizens are connected. Participatory engineering either supports or is supported by communicative actions among political representatives, or both. The fact that no significant relationship was found regarding the function of citizen interaction in relation to decision-making, or more precisely the use of citizen interaction for making good decisions, any how indicate that the communicative action connected to participatory engineering is not influential over the representatives decision-making. This issue will be investigated further in the last empirical section focusing on the relationship between experience of participatory engineering and the roles of representation among the respondents.

Roles of political representation

Roles of representation regards political representatives' perception of the nature of the political mandate (Sjölin 1993:8). By way of investigating the role-taking of political representatives researchers have aimed to assess their perceptions regarding what their mandate entails, if they are open or bound and if so to whom they are bound. Put in more concrete terms, roles of representation investigates the basis for political decisions, who's will should be decisive when political representatives make a decision and prioritize between competing interests. In this study, as in many others (Esaiasson & Holmberg 1996, Holmberg 1999, Bäck 2000, Zittel 2002), we differentiate between three different roles of representation, trustee, delegate and party representative. The trustee is a representative who foremost listens to his own convictions when making a decision as a political representative. Trustees conceives the political mandate as open for their interpretations about what is right and wrong. The remaining roles, delegate and party representative are opposite the trustee role as they entail a perception of the political mandate as bound. These representatives see themselves as representing the will of either their voters (delegate) or their party (party representative). They perceive themselves as agents and their own conviction is therefore subordinate to the expressed will of their principal.
In this section we compare the distribution of these three roles in pioneer and hestitator municipalities in order to assess whether diverging experiences of participatory engineering in the municipality co-variate with role taking. While the proposition of continuity anticipates that the representatives in the two groups will have a similar distribution of roles the proposition of change entails that fewer respondents will be party representatives in pioneer municipalities. The study any how shows that the three roles of representation are to a great extent distributed after the same pattern in hestitator- as well as pioneer municipalities, indicating continuity in the role taking of political representatives. No statistically significant relationships are found between experience of participatory engineering in the municipality and any of the roles of representation, when investigated in a logistic regression analysis. These results indicate a strong support for the proposition of continuity. The only significant relationships that are found in the analysis of role orientation regard party orientation. The analysis indicates that the odds for being a party representative increase, and being a delegate decrease when the political orientation is “left” compared to “right”.

Table 4: Logistic regression analysis: traditional roles of representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trustee</th>
<th>Party representative</th>
<th>Delegate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pioneer</td>
<td>1,646</td>
<td>.788</td>
<td>1,021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.319)</td>
<td>(.308)</td>
<td>(.586)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (Man)</td>
<td>1,324</td>
<td>.894</td>
<td>.996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.327)</td>
<td>(.316)</td>
<td>(.602)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political orientation (left)</td>
<td>.341</td>
<td>2.341**</td>
<td>.776**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.324)</td>
<td>(.306)</td>
<td>(.597)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (&lt;50 years old)</td>
<td>.821</td>
<td>1,486</td>
<td>1,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.333)</td>
<td>(.320)</td>
<td>(.608)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerkje R Square</td>
<td>(.108)</td>
<td>(.003)</td>
<td>(.076)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments: **p>0.01, *p>0.05, The table displays Exp(B) values. Standard errors are displayed in between brackets. Significant relationships are crossed. The following survey question was used: “If, when examining an important issue of principle in a political assembly a conflict emerges between a member’s own opinion, the opinion of his/her party or the opinion of the voters, how should, in your opinion, a member of the assembly vote?” and the respondents were given three alternatives to chose from, their own view, the view of the party or the view of the citizens.
The results of the analysis in this section are very clearly indicating continuity in the role taking of political representatives – when related to the experience of participatory engineering. No significant relationships are found between representing a pioneer municipality and any of the roles of representation. Therefore we can conclude that the Swedish tradition of strong party dependence on political representation doesn't seem to be threatened by the implementation of participatory engineering.

Conclusions

In this paper the relationship between participatory engineering and political representation has been investigated. The trend of participatory engineering projects in Swedish municipalities was first related to the debate of a crisis for political parties and Swedish political context. In this discussion it was concluded that the strong position of political parties and the separation of participatory engineering from party politics in Sweden create circumstances that possibly hinder progress towards an interconnection of participatory politics in representative democracy. If participatory projects are not adopted to fit the needs and wishes of politicians, or politicians are not adapting their style of representation to fit these forms of participation, participatory engineering can be expected to have little importance in the overall picture of local democracy and decision-making. The empirical analysis addresses the culture of representation in municipalities where extensive participatory engineering has been carried out and compares this culture to the situation in municipalities where few or no projects of participatory engineering has been implemented. The main question under investigation is whether the discrepancy between the two case groups are characterized by continuity or change.

The results from the analysis point to a somewhat complex relationship. Representatives with extensive experience of participatory engineering projects have more positive attitudes towards citizen participation and report a higher frequency of- as well as more positive attitudes towards vertical communication. At the same time their pattern of representational roles are to a great extent similar to the situation in the municipalities where the fewest participatory engineering projects have been implemented; which indicates continuity in the culture of representation. These results indicate that the implementation of participatory engineering in a municipality indeed co-variate with a different culture among political representatives, but also that this culture does not effect the core of the roles of representatives - the procedure of making decisions. Hence, the party centered culture of political
representation seem to prevail through this development with an intense diffusion of participatory engineering projects in Swedish municipalities. The results, in other words, give indications of both continuity and change. But how can the differences in attitudes towards citizen participation and communicative representation be understood when traditional party centered forms of decision making remain prominent? At least two interpretations of these results seem possible, one that in the light of this coexistence disproves the existence of difference in the culture of representation, and another interpretation see to the possibility of a different culture of representation emerging within the frame of party centered representation. These two contesting interpretations are presented below as the closed- and the open party.

The closed party

The results from this study raise the suspicion that extensive participatory engineering, although it effects the attitudes of the representatives on the surface, don’t influence the core values regarding political representation. This could be understood as a situation where citizen participation and the communication with citizens is separated from the formation of politics within the parties and only regards predetermined positions. Public participation and vertical communication therefore does not threaten the primacy of the political parties. A possible reason why interactivity towards citizens is still found important among these representatives adhere from party competition. Participatory engineering has moved the battle for voters to new arenas in which participation and interactivity are key words. Since citizens no longer only participate through the political parties and also in between elections, a permanent campaign has been created. Therefore communication and interactivity is imperative to win votes. Interactivity is in this interpretation understood as purely instrumental and strategical action (Zittel 2009, Mayhew 1974), and thus fully compatible with party representation.

The open party

Another interpretation is that participatory engineering instead of leading to a demise of party representation rather seems to lead to a re-conceptualization of what party representation entails. In accordance with this interpretation is it possible to view “sincere” vertical interaction and promotion of citizen participation as compatible with a party centered view of representation. This, if the role of
political parties is reinterpreted in the direction towards an institutional framework for discussion rather than a static institution of party programs and electoral pledges that bounds political representatives (Lewin 1970:224). The will formation process can be open for influence from citizen participation since the party line isn’t fixed until the interactive process of representation is implemented. To be bound to the position of the party is in such notion not the same as excluding citizen participation but to integrate it into party politics. When the interactive process is fully implemented and party decisions has been made with reference to the citizen influence, representatives are any how bound to follow the party line in decision-making.

Concluding remarks

These diverging interpretations cannot be empirically addressed on the basis of this study. This assignment calls for qualitative methods and in-depth analysis of the workings of intra-party democracy. We must therefore leave the interpretation of the results of this study open and await further investigation. What is anyhow evident when assessing the results from this analysis is the importance and fruitfulness of addressing political representation in relation to participatory engineering. Positive attitudes towards citizen participation and vertical communication in local democracy among politic representatives does not give the whole picture of their relationship towards participatory engineering as the role taking among these representatives point towards an unwillingness to let citizen participation influence the decision-making. On the basis of the results from this study it is suggested that the functioning of participatory engineering must be understood in relation to the culture of representation among local political representatives.
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