1.1 The Impact of the Digital Revolution on Citizen-Governance Interaction in the Finnish Context

Marja Silvolahti, Eemeli Peltonen, Juho Myyryläinen, Oona Laine, Kaarina Järventaus
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Helsinki

Abstract

This research paper examines the impact of the digital revolution on citizens and governance. New technologies introduce tools and platforms that provide new forms of participation such as e-voting, initiatives and mass mobilization. The digital revolution and new technologies have improved citizens' political participation and engaged citizens in political decision-making. Alongside political inclusion, technology provides citizens with a platform for interaction with each other and political decision-makers, which can be seen as contributing to the deliberative development of society.

New technologies have improved the chance of citizens' participation, but the mere possibility of participation may not be sufficient to promote democracy and political participation. Engaging citizens in political decision-making may be challenging for "traditional reasons": lack of political interest or knowledge. However, too much skepticism about citizen engagement is not entirely justified, as new technologies offer the potential to expand social capital.

Keywords: Electronic democracy, online deliberation, electronic voting, citizens' initiatives, crowdsourcing, participatory budgeting, citizen-governance interaction

1. Introduction

In this research paper we explore how the advent of new technologies in the 21st century have impacted the interaction between citizens and governance in Finland. By new technologies we refer to all the new tools and networking platforms brought about by the digital revolution. These tools and platforms under our investigation include social media, web-based programs and new means of electronic participation, for example e-voting.

We will narrow our focus to the Finnish experiences of new ways of communication in citizen-governance interaction. We expect to find case-based evidence about the implications of the digital revolution for the means of participation and conduct of governance. Our key research questions are:

- What implications has the digital revolution of the 21st century had on citizen-governance interaction in the Finnish context?
- How have new tools and technologies changed the ways of conducting governance?
- How could the Internet be made more friendly for democratic deliberation?
- What problems does the digital revolution pose for participation, governance and respectful deliberation as well as a properly functioning public sphere?

We decided to begin our research paper by defining some of the key concepts of our research, in order to have a common base for our individual contributions. Next, we move on to explore five specific cases of citizen-governance interaction in the digital era of the 21st century. In the first chapter, we explore how the Internet could be made more friendly to democratic deliberation. The second chapter addresses the question of e-democracy through a crucial practical aspect of it, namely electronic voting. The third case study looks at citizen initiatives: do they really matter and what motivates citizens to try to achieve their political goals through them? Our two final chapters explore cases of crowdsourcing in policy-making and participatory budgeting in the Finnish context.

2. Key concepts

Digital revolution

Despite the widespread use of this concept, it is not always defined specifically in contemporary everyday use. The digital revolution is all about broad technological *changes* in politics, culture, economics and business. As a result of these changes digital technology will take a more prominent and central place in our everyday lives. No aspect of human life, communication or business will be completely separated from the digital revolution, which continues to expand (Meyer 2016).

The digital revolution includes the *"rise of digital platforms, cutting edge forms of automation and Big Data"* (Spence 2019). Although the concept of the digital revolution is already vastly used, we have not yet seen all of its implications. Thus, we argue that the digital revolution will change our politics, economics and business during the time period of the 21st century as we proceed into the future.

Luciano Floridi goes even further to describe how the digital revolution affects our everyday lives. He argues that the digital revolution will also change our social selves and the way we see ourselves. The digital revolution and ICT have put forward new concerns of privacy, openness and transparency. (Floridi 2014) These examples from Floridi's writings exemplify how profoundly the digital revolution will shape our world.

Henning Meyer argues that *"there is a general lack of structured analysis of the ways in which technological progress translates into real life"* (Meyer 2016). Thus, our research paper aims to capture one dimension of this large and complex transformation by examining the impact of the digital revolution on citizen-governance interaction in the Finnish context during recent years.

We expect to find evidence for growing interconnectedness between citizens and government. We also hope to build a general view on the current situation of how new digital tools are used by Finnish governance. Can the digital revolution bring citizens closer to those who aspire to rule them? Have the challenges in citizen-governance interaction changed with digital revolution, or are they more deep-rooted by nature?

Public sphere and public opinion

The theoretical point of view in this research paper is the thinking by Jürgen Habermas regarding the public sphere. Habermas defines this useful term in his article "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article" (1964) as follows:

By the "public sphere" we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching *public opinion* can be formed. *Access is guaranteed to all citizens.* A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private citizens assemble to form a public body…Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion—that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions—about *matters of general interest.* (Habermas 1964, p. 50, italics added)

The formation and manifestation of public opinion is relevant in all the themes we address throughout this paper. A democratic system of governance requires these two processes in order to represent the political will of the citizens that it represents. Accurate representation is also the goal of the equal and unrestricted access that Habermas mentions.

The digital revolution has had an undeniable impact on the public sphere and the forming of public opinion. This development has brought to life new platforms and forums, annihilated the significance of geographical distance in communication

between individuals, and made it easy for people to create their own publicities around what matters to them. It allows decision-makers and the governance in general to collect data about peoples' opinions and preferences and to hear the voice of the general public more easily than before. In these ways, the digital revolution shortens the distance both between citizens and between citizens and governance. On the other hand, much of the discussion that takes place online does not necessarily count as quality deliberation, and the opinions that come across from discussions are not necessarily manifestations of public opinion as opposed to the voice of a few loud actors.

Governance

Andrew Heywood defines governance as "…a broader term than government. Although it still has no settled or agreed definition, it refers, in its widest sense, to the various ways through which social life is coordinated. Governments can therefore be seen as one of the institutions involved in governance" (Heywood 2007). In this research paper we use this definition. We prefer to use a concept that is reasonably wide to capture as many aspects of governance as possible in our Finnish context.

Heywood continues to define three principal modes of governance: markets, hierarchies and networks (Heywood 2007). Our research will be focused on the latter two of these modes: hierarchies and networks. We are especially interested in tools of governance that are used to amalgamate and coordinate citizens' preferences to policy-outputs and policies. In Habermas' words these tools advance participation in the forming of public opinion, and inform the governance of it. For example, citizen initiatives and e-voting are such tools.

We see four distinct values central to governance: participation, communication, pluralism and accountability. Governments have many tools for conducting governance which fulfill these values. Democratic governance has to keep up with the changing technological challenges and opportunities, and we wish to shed some light on how the Finnish government has succeeded in this during the recent years.

3. How to make the Internet more friendly for democratic deliberation?

The Internet has become an integral part of the public sphere, where people can debate about current political and societal issues. Despite its many possibilities, the Internet is not always an ideal environment for democratic deliberation. For example, anonymity, hate-speech and bubbles can weaken the Internet as a platform for good and respectful deliberation between individuals. In this research paper I investigate how the Internet could be made friendlier to democratic deliberation.

Deliberative democracy and the Internet

André Bächtiger, John S. Dryzek, Jane Mansbridge and Mark E. Warren define deliberative democracy to mean "mutual communication that involves weighing and reflecting on preferences, values, and interests regarding matters of common concern" (Bächtiger et al. 2018, p. 2). I use this definition of deliberative democracy here because of its clarity and simplicity, compared to other definitions presented in academic research.

Democratic deliberation refers to all forms of deliberation that fulfill democratic ideals. These ideal can also be used as standards of good deliberation. According to second generation theorists of deliberative democracy, standards of good deliberation include mutual respect, absence of power, inclusion, aim at consensus, publicity and accountability (Bächtinger et al. 2018, p. 4).

Theorists of deliberative democracy highlight how democratic deliberation can occur in many distinct sites. For example, formal institutions of government and civil society are often mentioned as sites for democratic deliberation (Bächtiger et al. 2018, p. 11). The Internet can also be seen as a site for democratic deliberation, because of its rapid rise as an important part of today's public sphere. When considering Jürgen Habermas' definition of the public sphere (Habermas 1991, p. 30), I locate the Internet's existence between the private realm and the sphere of public authority, much like the pre-Intenet public sphere in the political realm which existed between private households and state authority.

Democratic deliberation can occur on the Internet in many forms. Blogs, open-access websites and comment sections are places where everyone can easily discuss and deliberate about current issues. Popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram also offer many opportunities for democratic deliberation between citizens, without limitations of time or space.

Problems of democratic deliberation on the Internet

I measure the quality of democratic deliberation on the Internet by using standards of good deliberation described earlier. The Internet differs from other sites of democratic deliberation in many ways. These features complicate the fulfillment of the standards for good deliberation.

One of the most striking qualities of the Internet is the absence of editors on many communication platforms. Traditional newspapers and magazines have editors who control what opinions and comments are published in the paper. However, many websites do not have any editors controlling the flow of messages and comments between individuals. This absence of moderation threatens the standards of good deliberation, because no one monitors or controls these discussions in order to ensure the quality of their content.

Absence of moderation can lead to a proliferation of hate-speech and disrespectful debate. There is a lot of evidence about this dark side of communication

on the Internet. Recently it has been found that more than half of Americans have experienced harassment, hateful speech, physical threats and bigotry when using the Internet (USA Today, 2019). Hate-speech violates many standards of good deliberation, for example mutual respect, inclusion and the absence of coercive power.

It has also been found that the growing use of new social media platforms (such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) has increased the amount of fake news and disinformation (Martens et al. 2018, p. 8-10). Fake news poses a clear threat to good standards of deliberation.

Another distinct quality of Internet-based deliberation is anonymity. Many communication platforms like 4chan and reddit offer posters possibilities for deliberation without revealing their real name. Fake accounts are also easy to create on Facebook and Twitter. When compared to traditional media, there is usually some kind of restriction on anonymity (although nicknames can be used after a binding registration, for example in comment sections for newspaper articles on the Internet).

The Internet, and especially social media, can also create social bubbles, filtering of information and group polarization, which endanger good deliberation (Sunstein 2017, p. 59-97). Previous research on Internet-based communication supports the conclusion of the Internet fostering communication with already like-minded people (Sunstein 2017, p. 76-77). Thus, large online groups can spend years communicating with like-minded citizens without ever hearing or reading contrary views.

This phenomenon increases the risk of group polarization in society. Citizens communicating mainly inside their own social bubble become increasingly isolated from other groups. This is troubling because when various cross sections of groups are communicating *"society will hear a far wider range of views"* (Sunstein 2017, 86). Polarization between groups can also increase anxiety and suspicions about people communicating in a different social bubble or group.

How to make the Internet more friendly for democratic deliberation?

After discussing problems of Internet-based communication, I will now move forward to offer solutions for making the Internet friendlier for democratic deliberation. First, I will underline some basic elements of the Internet that help advance democratic deliberation.

The Internet is clearly more accessible for citizens than traditional media platforms. Not everyone can get their response published on the pages of *Newsweek* or the *New York Times*, for example. The Internet provides a platform of publication for almost any author with any kind of content imaginable.

The Internet is also a highly visible site for deliberation. Comment sections and open Facebook groups are good examples of highly public sites for democratic deliberation. Anyone can read discussions taking place in open Facebook groups. Usually only registration is required before you can post your own comment or response to a news article on a newspaper's public discussion forum.

Despite these advantages, I cited some problems relating to Internet-based communication above. These problems underline the need for more inclusive, open and moderated discussions. Cass R. Sunstein has proposed seven solutions for making the Internet more friendly for democratic deliberation: deliberative domains, disclosure of relevant conduct, voluntary self-regulation, economic subsidies for public networks, must-carry policies for media, creative use of links to draw people's attention to multiple views and opposing viewpoints (or serendipity) buttons (Sunstein 2017, p. 215; Economist 2017). Sunstein's proposals are presented and further described in the table below.

Cass R. Sunstein's proposal for increasing democratic deliberation on the Internet (Sunstein 2017)	
Proposal	**Description of the proposal**
Deliberative domains	Moderated (or edited) platforms for democratic deliberation between individual citizens.
Disclosure of relevant conduct	Policies aimed to encourage media to disclose relevant information about their content (for example, giving information about the suitability of programming on television).
Voluntary self-regulation	Voluntary self-regulation is about media companies regulating themselves, for example by providing a wide range of views for the public.
Economic subsidies for public networks	Public funding for media companies which aims to avoid polarization and consumerism of the news media.
Must-carry policies for media	Legislation, which requires media companies to provide the public with specific relevant information, news and programs (for example, about political debates, elections and democratic principles).
Creative use of links	Offering readers opposing viewpoints via links to different articles.
Opposing viewpoint buttons	Buttons that provide opposing viewpoints for users who are interested in them (for example, after reading a news article about a specific topic).

Sunstein's deliberative domains are platforms where discussion is moderated. These platforms offer spaces where citizens can meet and deliberate about different topics. The aim of these platforms is to foster better understanding, learning and citizen engagement (Sunstein 2017, p. 216-217). Deliberative domains can be seen as somewhat naïve because, for example, citizens do not have any incentive to switch from Facebook to deliberative domains if they are satisfied and familiar with communication on Facebook.

A creative use of links and opposing viewpoint buttons can be seen as a more realistic solutions for problems relating to deliberation on the Internet. According to

Sunstein, newspapers and digital platforms should also offer readers articles that contain different viewpoints on the topic they have previously read about (Sunstein 2017, p. 229). This creative use of links could expose readers to a diverse range of information through other readers' stances and beliefs. Sunstein also proposes the introduction of opposing viewpoint buttons, which would offer readers *"opposing viewpoints by default, subject to the right to opt out"* (Sunstein 2017, p. 232-233). For example, these buttons could be included in web-based articles of a specific newspaper's digital edition or all of a newspaper's website articles.

Concluding thoughts

As I have stated above, the Internet has both advantages and disadvantages for democratic deliberation. I have listed a few proposals from existing research for making the Internet friendlier for democratic deliberation. I view these proposals with skepticism because they would require a complete reform of the Internet. Since no one owns or controls the Internet, these proposals would be extremely difficult to implement. Thus, it is up to governments, organizations, companies and individuals to come together and try to carry out solutions that fulfill standards of good deliberation on Internet-based platforms. These solutions do not come easily and require extensive co-operation between different actors.

4. Electronic voting in Finland – many attempts, little success

Moving on from the process of deliberation to finding ways to organize society in accordance with the results of deliberation, voting and elections are the focus of this chapter. A manifestation of "something approaching public opinion" (Habermas 1962; p. 1974) created in the public sphere is the goal of organizing elections. Democracy requires a way of getting to know how people think and what they want. In representative democracies such as Finland, elections aim at selecting a group of people that would share the thoughts of those who voted for them and—at least ideally— represent the citizens as accurately as possible. In the Habermasian sense, the formation of public opinion happens in the deliberation prior to the actual election, and the election result provides a concrete outline of it.

Voting is an encounter between the private and the public spheres. It is an act of an individual, as each citizen enters the voting booth alone. The secrecy of the ballot is an institutionalized principle to guarantee that all citizens can indeed decide for themselves without having to worry about social consequences or their vote going public. In Finland this principle is secured in the constitution (731/1999, 25 §). On the other hand, much of what happens prior to and after the casting of the vote is very much public. In elections the governance and the citizen come together in a concrete way.

Could electronic voting bring people to the ballots?

Turnout in Finnish elections has been decreasing since the 1970s. This has been seen as a signal of growing political disinterestedness, and even the proverbial "crisis of democracy". In the 2019 parliamentary elections the turnout was 72,1 % (Statistics Finland). Research shows that the level of political participation varies across Finland, and turnout percentages are the lowest among groups that are in socio-economically weaker positions in society (Wass & Borg, 2016). An often-proposed solution for this participation challenge is electronic voting: maybe if those who do not go and vote at their designated voting place would cast their vote if they could do it where they wish to, using their computers or smartphones.

In recent decades electronic voting has been considered by working committees under several different cabinets. The most recent case was a working group requested in 2016 when Juha Sipilä, prime minister and the head of the cabinet bearing his name, claimed that Finland would be moving to electronic voting in the future, with the traditional paper method of voting still continuing to exist as an option. However, the working group came to the conclusion that the risks of online voting outweigh its benefits. Several issues were identified, namely the reconciliation of verifiability and election secrecy (the data of the voter would have to be stored alongside with the vote so that it could be later verified, but this would be illegal and compromise the secrecy of the ballot), manipulation of election results, breaching of election secrecy, and external interference through denial-of-service attacks. The biggest concern named by the working group was the loss of public confidence, which could easily be caused by spreading disinformation and rumors.

Another counterargument to an electronic voting system that the working group identifies is that it does not seem to solve the problem of decreasing voter turnout. It refers to several Nordic and Canadian research projects which have found that electronic voting does not increase turnout (Bergh & Christensen 2012; Segaard, Bock, Baldersheim & Saglie 2012; Bochsler 2010) and that the people who do vote electronically are ones that would vote anyway, regardless of the method (Goodman 2014). The only research this report refers to that gives a positive estimation of potential increase in turnout assesses this increase to be a rather modest percentage, around 2-3% (Vassil, Kristjan, Weber, Till 2011).

Finnish citizens' attitudes towards electronic voting have not been representatively surveyed. The closest things to such a survey are two municipal level democracy ARTTU surveys conducted in 2008 and 2011, where people living in a cluster of Finnish municipalities were asked to agree or disagree with the claim, "People should be allowed to vote via the Internet in municipal elections". A more recent Special Eurobarometer Survey requested by the European Commission (2018) mapped European Union citizens' thoughts on new voting methods, and their concerns are in line with these challenges identified by the Finnish working group.

Citizens were asked to imagine that they were able to vote electronically, online or by post, and then to name their possible concerns about voting using these methods. The most cited concern in the survey was the potential for fraud or cyberattack: 68% said they were concerned, one third (33%) were very concerned. The idea that these systems posed difficulties to some segments of the population, such as people with disabilities or older people, was a concern for almost two thirds (65%) of the respondents. More than half were also concerned about voters being influenced by third parties (56%), and about the secrecy of the ballot (55%), with 23% and 24% very concerned, respectively.

In the 2008 municipal elections, electronic voting was tested in three municipalities. The system did not work correctly, and in 2009 the Supreme Administrative Court of Finland decided that voting was to be reorganized in these three municipalities. In addition to technical issues, the instructions provided were unclear and insufficient. No tests have been conducted since. However, the results of the 2008 test are valuable and point out that a functional electronic voting system requires more than just reliable technology—the voter needs to be well instructed and there cannot be any ambiguity in the communication.

Electoral term 2019-2023: no plans for e-voting

In 2019, the recently appointed Ministers of the Interior (Maria Ohisalo, Green League) and Justice (Anna-Maja Henriksson, Swedish People's Party) both stated that for now, there is no need to consider updating the Finnish voting system. In a news article by Yle their opinions on the issue were very like-minded: the present system may be a bit "old-fashioned", but it is both secure and functional, and alternative methods presented to this day are too risky. With these statements and the pessimistic conclusions in the report requested by the Juha Sipilä cabinet, it seems unlikely that Finland would be taking any steps towards an electronic voting system in the upcoming years.

The Nordic countries would have many advantages if they wanted to be e-voting frontrunners. These countries are known to be some of the most stable democracies in the world, with little corruption and next to no past cases of electoral fraud. They are countries of high educational level, and the welfare state model allows willing states to invest in completely tax-paid development and research projects. One can think that another advantage are the relatively small populations in the Nordic countries, with a population of 4-6 million in most of them, and only 10 million in Sweden. Adopting a new large-scale system on the state level seems intuitively easier and more flexible in less populated countries. However, whether electronic voting will be advanced in the future is as much a question of trust as it is of technological development.

5. Civic initiatives – do they really matter, especially in the digital era?

In addition to e-voting, there are also other prominent ways to increase citizens' role in a deliberative democracy. Democracy researcher Rolf Büchi has said that direct democracy is a subtle process and its relevant elements are start, public conversation, decision-making and implementation (Büchi 2011, 107). Perhaps one of the biggest phenomena in recent years for that "starting point" has been the civic initiative. When we talk about civic initiatives, we mean procedures that "allow citizens to bring new issues to the political agenda through collective action, that is, through collecting a certain number of signatures in support of a policy proposal" (Schiller & Setälä 2012, p. 1).

Kansalaisaloite.fi

In Finland, citizens' initiative is a tool for direct democracy which enables a minimum of 50,000 Finnish citizens of voting age to submit an initiative to the Parliament of Finland to enact an act (Väestörekisterikeskus). The initiative must include a bill or a proposal to start drafting legislation and the reasons for the proposal, and it must also apply to a matter that can be enacted by law. The development of digital technology, the Internet and social media has really speeded up the meaning of civic initiatives. The Ministry of Justice in Finland has set up an online system to collect statements of support; namely, Kansalaisaloite.fi where anyone can open an initiative and collect signatures. It is also possible for citizens to organize a municipal citizens' initiative (Kuntalaisaloite.fi) or simply editorialize some societal or political question (Otakantaa.fi).

It is obvious that when collecting civic initiatives online, space does not matter anymore, and time becomes more flexible, as well. People can sign civic initiatives anywhere and anytime; and by using social media channels such as Facebook, civic initiatives can spread rapidly and far. It is possible to speak about "mediated relations" (Grossi 2011, p. 4), which are unbound by time and space and which concern both people and their relations with organisations, institutions, places, goods, and objects. So, we can also see such a small concept, online initiatives, as a notable means to building and maintaining a lively public sphere where people and their civic society engage politicians and the state, in other words, governance. When assembling virtually for some topic, initiatives require direct deliberation of the Finnish Parliament. I interpret this as a converging relationship between private sorrows or hopes and public authority and formal politics. Initiatives create a picture of citizens' lives when they handle such themes as maternity law, free second-degree education or euthanasia (Kansalaisaloite.fi 2019). Browsing the website provides a remarkable insight into what citizens are worried about, as all civic initiatives are displayed in the same place.

But the whole picture is not that simple. We cannot claim that signing civic initiatives is an unequivocal solution for challenges of today's public sphere and deliberative democracy. Even though it could be claimed that civic initiatives aggregate

citizens together and create a temporary community which forms at least a part of public opinion or public thoughts, initiatives could be claimed to emphasize only "liberal-individualist digital democracy" (Dahlberg, 2011). Digital media is understood here as "enabling individuals to gain the information they need to examine competing political positions and problems" and also providing them with the means for the registration, and subsequent aggregation (Dahlberg 2011, p. 861). Instead, civic initiatives do not formulate deliberatively constituted consensus, that is to say, rational public opinion, or make people argue, inform, reflect or publicize (Dahlberg 2011, p. 11).

So, civic initiatives still keep people and their opinions somewhat apart from each other, and they are purely individual choices and not vehicles for deliberation. We are not so communicative when we sign initiatives. We are able to surf the Internet and skip all the initiatives or just choose one which appeals to us. The facility to sign or not to sign concerns also the launching of civic initiatives. But launching or signing does not mean that something will happen. At the moment there are 69 ongoing and 955 completed civic initiatives on Kansalaisaloite.fi, but only 28 civic initiatives have been delivered to the Finnish Parliament. Also, we must remember that when an initiative is referred to parliament, representatives still have a right to do whatever they decide to do with it. It is conventional that civic initiatives do not pass as such, which will probably be the case of Suostumus2018 which demands a new rape law with a clear mention of consent (Yle 2019).

Such a marginal vehicle?

It could be claimed that the number of initiatives reflects the notion of a consumer-citizen. This kind of a citizen has so many choices that it is not important to even think deeply about them; so, you can sign civic initiatives even if you are not sufficiently informed about it, simply because you can. Giorgio Grossi uses the term "audience democracy" as a central concept. According to Grossi, we have moved from the space for discussion and formation of public opinion to a mere area of projective and symbolic identification typical of the "society of the spectacle" and a new social environment which only favors the personalisation of choices and walks of life (Grossi 2011, p. 7).

This also causes the loosening of unsatisfactory cooperative and solidaristic ties (Grossi 2011, p. 6). This change in society and political life will deepen even more as the ongoing digital revolution continues. It is natural to differentiate one from the other and construct our own social, political and cultural bubbles when the Internet and especially social media are so broad, even boundless. The website Kansalaisaloite.fi might be precisely defined because the Ministry of Justice in Finland manages it, but there are many more areas and ways of trying to connect citizens, for instance the website Adressit.fi.

On the other hand, we need to remember that civic initiatives are a marginal vehicle for change, and people often do not give them much weight. And, as we have

noted before, the possibilities inherent in online devices do not guarantee that people who have never participated in politics and deliberation would suddenly change their attitudes. So, it is worth mentioning that the digital revolution does not automatically cause any kind of revolution of citizen-thinking; those who were and had been active and committed will continue to do so in the digital era. People have tools, but also free will to decide whether to use them or not.

Hence, civic initiatives online cannot be scrutinized from one perspective. We do claim that they serve as a significant connection between citizens and governance, and a possibility to participate and reflect on a plurality of opinions. Kansalaisaloite.fi is a channel for citizens to have an effect on governmental decisions and debates, and they bring private and public questions much closer together. The future will show if civic initiatives somehow extend and get a bigger value both among administrations and citizens, and if they lead to a different and more solid kind of citizen-governance-relationship. Grossi (2011) also uses the terms "transnational individualised societies" and "global village" in considering today's public sphere. The public sphere and public opinion can indeed be universal by means of global civic initiatives, but first they need to get their established place in a national social sphere.

6. Can crowdsourcing in policymaking foster democratic deliberation?

The digital revolution, especially networked online technology has made it possible for organisations and individuals to turn to a wider community of people to resolve problems and create new products. Initially a business concept, in recent years, the practice of crowdsourcing has been gaining ground also as a valuable tool in policymaking processes.

Definitions and different contexts of use

The concept and definition of crowdsourcing was first presented by the editor of Wired Magazine, Jeff Howe, in 2006: "Simply defined, crowdsourcing represents the act of a company or institution taking a function once performed by employees and outsourcing it to an undefined (and generally large) network of people in the form of an open call. This can take the form of peer-production (when the job is performed collaboratively), but is also often undertaken by sole individuals. The crucial prerequisite is the use of the open call format and the large network of potential laborers." The new business model had early successes in creative and design industries as well as in corporate scientific research and development. (Brabham 2008, p. 76-79)

Brabham (2008) defines crowdsourcing as "a strategic model to attract an interested, motivated crowd of individuals capable of providing solutions superior in quality and quantity to those that even traditional forms of business can." He quotes Surowiecki who argues that "under the right circumstances, groups are remarkably intelligent, and are often smarter than the smartest people in them" (Brabham 2008, p. 79.). According to Aitamurto and Chen (2017), crowdsourcing "means an open call for

anybody to participate in an online task". Outside business, crowdsourcing is used in very different fields like journalism, citizen science and crisis management (Aitamurto and Chen 2017, p. 3).

Crowdsourcing has been used in several countries in processes related to legislation or policy strategies: in constitutional processes in Iceland and Chile, in legislative or legal reforms in Finland and in Brazil, in strategy reforms by various US federal agencies, and on the municipal level in numerous urban planning projects. In policymaking, crowdsourcing can be used in different phases from problem identification and data gathering to developing proposals and consultation and to drafting policies, as well as implementing and evaluating decisions. In decision-making it is not applied very often, because in representative democracies decisions are made by elected bodies (Aitamurto & Chen 2017, p. 1-4).

The Finnish case

The Finnish Ministry of Environment and the Committee for the future of the Finnish Parliament decided for the first time to use crowdsourcing in a law reform in 2013. The law in question was the off-road traffic law. Off-road traffic in Finland consists mostly of snowmobiles and all-terrain. Off-road traffic had increased substantially and this created various controversies. Crowdsourcing was used in the research and drafting phase of the new legislation. Usually when laws are prepared, civil servants have direct contacts with different interest groups and with an expert committee with different stakeholders. This time, the Ministry also wanted to use crowdsourcing, aiming in its own words to "search for knowledge and ideas from the crowd, enhance people's understanding of the law, and attempt to increase the perception of the policy's legitimacy" (Aitamurto & Landemore 2016, p. 177-178).

In 2013, an online platform was opened where citizens could propose ideas, vote others´ ideas up or down, and comment. There were two crowdsourcing phases that generated about 500 ideas and 4,000 comments as well as 24,000 up or down votes from about 700 users altogether. The first phase was dedicated to problem mapping and the second phase aimed to generate and evaluate problem solving ideas. The authors of the research article were active in designing the crowdsourcing platform. The platform was open to everybody, but to participate actively, one had to register with a verifiable e-mail address. (Aitamurto & Landemore 2016, p. 178-179)

As a practice, crowdsourcing enhances democratic value in several ways. It increases transparency both among peers and between the crowd and crowdsourcers, who are often policymakers. It informs citizens when the projects are still in their planning phases. It also increases inclusiveness, as it invites a large number of citizens to participate in policymaking. (Aitamurto and Chen 2017, p. 1-12)

Amoretti distinguishes between four types of e-democracy: consultative, participative, deliberative and administrative e-democracies (Amoretti 2006, p. 11-13). Crowdsourcing can be either consultative, participative or deliberative. In the Finnish case, the process was designed to be participatory, and that goal was reached, as 700

citizens participated actively. The question is whether it was also a deliberative process. Was the quality of discursive process emphasized, as well as rational reasoning?

The classical standards of good deliberation are: respect, absence of power, equality, reasons, aim at consensus, common good orientation, publicity, accountability and sincerity (Bächtiger & al. 2018, p. 4). In the Finnish case, many of these standards were well actualized and some others to a certain degree, even if the process was not designed to be a deliberative process.

Aitamurto and Landemore argue that the participants could act freely and that they were equal. On the other hand, they admit that the tone was not always respectful (Aitamurto & Landemore 2016, p. 186-188). Participants exchanged arguments in a dialogical manner. It was possible to distinguish arguments, counter-arguments, examples, counter-examples, conceptual distinctions, new propositions and use of evaluative criteria (Aitamurto & Landemore 2016, p. 182-186). These observations indicate that reasoning did happen, that there was a common good orientation and that at least many participants aimed at common understanding, if not at perfect consensus. On the other hand, the common goal was not to find a consensus but to communicate a plurality of aspects and experiences related to off-road traffic to policy-makers. The criterion of publicity was fulfilled, as the debate happened openly on a public platform. When it comes to participants, a minimum standard of accountability was achieved by the use of e-mail addresses. As for policy-makers, the crowdsourcing process increased their accountability, since the process of lawmaking was made transparent and because it is more difficult to ignore citizens´ views once they have been asked for and published.

It is important to remember that the crowdsourcing process cannot be seen as conveying "public opinion". Technically, the material is a self-selected sample and it is not representative (Aitamurto and Chen 2017, p. 5-6; Brabham, p. 86). Brabham sees a risk of strengthening already extant hegemonies and suggests that we should keep a "constant eye on who is missing from the crowd" (Brabham, p. 86-87). Compared to traditional administrative and political approaches, crowdsourcing adds inclusiveness to the process. Still, the ideal of inclusiveness could probably be pursued even better than was done in the Finnish case.

Concluding thoughts

To conclude this section, it can be said that an analysis of the Finnish crowdsourced law reform proves that crowdsourcing can include a relatively high degree of democratic deliberation. This seemed to be the case even though the process was not designed with that goal in mind. An important factor was certainly the deliberative domain (platform) skillfully founded and moderated by civil servants and media specialists. The process clearly increased both communication and participation on the citizen level and favored the expression of a plurality of views. It also increased inclusiveness, but did not resolve all the problems related to it.

7. Has participatory budgeting empowered citizens?

It can be said that democracy cannot only be taught to citizens on a theoretical level, but that the political and economic skills it requires can be learned by taking different actions in different arenas. Participatory budgeting (PB) is an example of one such trend. Participatory budgeting represents citizen involvement in public decision-making. This encompasses both democratic and economic innovation at the same time: PB can be said to give people "real power over real money" (Shah 2007, p. 45-47). The basic idea behind PB is to enable citizens to influence the use of public money in their own region when deciding on a budget and voting on viable ideas. Hence PB is meant to lead citizen participation and pluralism of economic power. The concept behind PB is the concept of participatory democracy and can be theoretically seen to follow the ideal of a deliberative concept of democracy: enabling citizens to debate ideas to be implemented: the best and most feasible idea is selected through social debate (Godwin 2018, p. 5-6). In public debate, citizens have the opportunity to define and prioritize the use of public wealth. As a complementary means of citizens' participation, PB represents the decentralization of power, which is associated with citizens' ability to make decisions.

Participatory budgeting can be characterized as a process of democratic decision-making and societal debate that offers the public sector the opportunity to encourage citizens to participate in political decision-making by accelerating democracy projects. The starting point for PB is therefore very grassroots, as citizens are the best experts on their needs in their daily lives, which can be seen to enhance the use of public funds and direct them to their most beneficial purposes (Godwin 2018, p. 12). Public sector funds consist of taxes at both the state and municipal levels, so it is reasonable to argue that it is financially fair to give citizens the opportunity to decide on the allocation of budgeted expenditure, which requires coherent communication between individuals and the public sector.

PB can be implemented by allocating part of the municipal budget for participatory budgeting. This will bring economic decision-making closer to the people and make it more likely that they will become more actively involved in the implementation of new ideas, which can be seen as reducing political inactivity and reticence. The idea of participatory budgeting also includes the concept of the budget being open, which means that it must be accessible to everyone, as well as easily understood. The budget can be visualized to improve comprehensibility which at the same time lowers the threshold for citizens to become familiar with the various stages of participatory budgeting (Shah 2007, p. 39).

In practice, PB goes through five stages: process design, brainstorming ideas, develop proposals, voting and project funding. Through its phases, PB seems, at the theoretical level, to be a complete means of controlling public funds and a stepping stone towards political inclusion and social justice. On the other hand, there are also problems that can be identified, especially at the voting stage: to represent a workable

fund allocation tool and to be legitimate, it should involve enough citizens with sufficient political knowledge (Godwin 2018, p. 10-11).

Participatory budgeting in Helsinki

In the autumn of 2019, participatory budgeting is a politically relevant topic in Helsinki, as it is in the process of being implemented. In Helsinki, PB is practiced on two different levels: "OmaStadi" service and the "RuutiBudjetti" (Omastadi 2019), which is aimed specifically at young people. Implementing participatory budgeting in Helsinki is a relatively new social innovation, implemented in two phases. First, citizens—regardless of age or place of residence—were allowed to make proposals for the use of public funds. In the second phase, feasible proposals are voted on (Hel.fi 2019).

The implementation of PB represents the deliberative aspect of digital democracy, offering citizens the ability to decide on the resources to be allocated through electronic means in an online environment. On the other hand, participatory budgeting also approaches autonomous Marxism as it provides citizens with a path of political participation through cooperation between the individual and the public sector in the context of resource allocation. According to Dahlberg (2011), autonomous Marxism seeks a radical change that enables individuals to increase their influence through decentralization. In other words, Helsinki can be seen as contributing to the realization of local democracy through a participatory budgeting project that gives citizens budgetary authority while narrowing the gap between political decision-makers and citizens through the use of the online environment. It is this online environment that creates a space for public decision-making in which decentralized decision-making can take place, with the participation of people other than those who have obtained a political mandate.

In the second phase of participatory budgeting, Helsinki residents were allowed to vote on plans for using the budget in the Omastadi.hel.fi e-service from 1 to 31 October 2019, and the city is expected to implement the ideas with the most votes. The realization of deliberative democracy in the context of the Internet requires that the platform utilized in the e-environment is sufficiently clear and easy to use so that citizens have an equal opportunity to participate (Dahlberg 2011, p. 6). The money allocated to Helsinki budgeting is distributed by population of a district. The Helsinki city council has granted a total of EUR 4.4 million annually through PB for implementing citizens' ideas (Hel.fi 2019). The projects to be voted on are very pragmatic and are very much linked to the grassroots level of citizens' everyday life, such as building landscapes, renovating parks and creating new meeting places for everyone. Appropriations for basic municipal activities, such as social and health services and education, are still decided by the city council.

While the amount set aside for participatory budgeting can be considered a lot in absolute terms, public investment—for example in infrastructure or public services—often proves to be expensive and, in relation to the city's total expenditure,

expenditure for participatory budgeting remains relatively low. In relation to Helsinki's total budgeted expenditure on investments (2019, 774M. €), only 0,5% of the total investment budget is earmarked for participatory budgeting. In this respect, much of Helsinki's overall budget is decided by city counsellors, which in turn undermines citizens' political involvement.

However, the low budget for PB is not the only problem that arises in Helsinki. The challenge of deliberative democracy is precisely the involvement of citizens in public debate, so that a common consensus can be reached at all. On the one hand, the problem may be citizens' indifference to "common issues". However, on the other hand, if citizens are viewed as political consumers, the city of Helsinki can be accused of poorly executed marketing that does not reach enough people to be interested in public economy. The basic idea behind PB is that it can also activate previously politically inactive citizens to participate in decision-making (Godwin 2018, p. 10-14), where Helsinki has been only moderately successful. According to the OmaStadi service, 10 435 members are involved in PB (Omastadi 2019). The distinction between active and inactive citizens is not available, but it is reasonable to assume that not all the slightly over 10,000 citizens are actively involved. Relative to the population of Helsinki (2018, 650,033), roughly 1.6% of Helsinki residents have taken advantage of their opportunity to participate in decision-making on the allocation of public funds, which, on reflection, can be considered to be a worryingly low percentage. However, participatory budgeting is still in the early stages of implementation in Helsinki, so there is reason to be optimistic about it. Budgeting as a new type of democratic innovation represents an important tool for democratizing society and involving citizens.

8. Conclusion

In this paper we have discussed how technology can impact citizen-governance interaction in Finland. There are many technological ways, both on the national and municipal levels, to bring governance and citizens closer to each other and to improve their relationship with each other. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the digital revolution and new technological applications have created solid solutions for the core problems of democratic deliberation or decision-making in the Finnish context.

As we first noted, it is obvious that the Internet as a whole allows a fruitful place for deliberation between citizens and governance. There are many examples, such as electronic voting, civic initiatives, crowdsourcing and participatory budgeting, which have or will have significant effects on our political and deliberative environment. These applications have, in our opinion, at least a possibility to enhance participation, communication, pluralism and accountability in governance for citizens.

It is apparent that when everyone is able to vote at home, sign civic initiatives online, or participate in crowdsourcing or municipal budgeting, deliberation and decision-making are much more transparent and also faster than they would be offline. In this situation, being an active citizen does not demand citizens' presence at any

given place, at any precise time; it is flexible for both parties, all of the possibilities lie "in the same place", and they are easier to utilise.

However, we cannot forget problems concerning anonymity, hate speech and different social bubbles which are hard to control or manage. We claim that making the Internet more friendly for citizen-governance interaction is an unfinished task that will likely continue to evolve. Technology cannot solve everything or suddenly change people or their thinking. We can further say that in Finland we are struggling with the same problems we have struggled with before. Active citizens are active online and offline, and the Internet does not automatically make passive citizens active. Second, the Internet is not a very open system, and we cannot trust technology to always work properly and solidly. There are many instances of hacking, data leakages and other similar dangers which we cannot prevent. The digital revolution is not complete.

That is why we have approached our subject in a clearly critical manner and we all claim that there are many challenges to solve before it can be even considered that technology can somehow save or enhance citizens' ability to participate and communicate with governance. What is apparent is that technology can greatly help us in creating a better citizen-governance relationship in Finland. Time will show if participatory budgeting and civic initiatives, among other things , have an effect on decision-making and politicians' thinking. At the very least it seems that informed citizens are likely to be more motivated to participate in issues of general interest.

References

Aitamurto, T., & Chen, K. (2017). The value of crowdsourcing in public policymaking: epistemic, democratic and economic value. *The Theory and Practice of Legislation*, 5(1), 55-72. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/20508840.2017.1282665

Aitamurto, T., & Landemore, H. (2016). Crowdsourced Deliberation: The Case of the Law on Off-Road Traffic in Finland. *Policy & Internet* 8(2), 174-196. doi:10.1002/poi3.115.

Amoretti, F. (2006). The Digital Revolution and Europe's constitutional process. E-democracy between ideology and Institutional practices. In VII *Congreso Espanol De Ciencia Politica Y De La Administracion*. 2006, 1-18.

Bächtiger, A., Dryzek J., Mansbridge, J. & Warren, M. (2018). *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brabham, D. C. (2008). Crowdsourcing as a model for problem solving: An introduction and cases. *Convergence*, 14(1), 75-90.

Büchi, R. (2011). Faktat pöytään, ihmiset pöydän ympärille. Of Ilvessalo, S. & Jaakkola, H., *Kansan valta: suora demokratia Suomen politiikan pelastuksena*, 103-118.

Dahlberg, L. (2011). Re-constructing digital democracy: An outline of four 'positions.' *New Media & Society*, 13(6), 855–872. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810389569

Economist, The. (2017). In praise of serendipity: Social media should encourage chance encounters, not customised experiences. March 9. https://www.economist.com/books-and-arts/2017/03/09/in-praise-of-serendipity

European Commission/Kantar Public Brussels. (2018). Special Eurobarometer 477: Democracy and Elections, summary.

Floridi, L. (2014). The 4th Revolution – How the infosphere is reshaping human reality. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Godwin, M. (2018). *Studying Participatory Budgeting: Democratic Innovation or Budgeting Tool?* https://doi.org/10.1177/0160323X18784333

Grönlund, K. & Wass, H. (2016). Poliittisen osallistumisen eriytyminen - Eduskuntavaalitutkimus 2015. Ministry of Justice, Finland.

Grossi, G. (2011). The public sphere and communication flows in the era of the Net. Of Dahlgren, The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication: Dispersion and Deliberation, «Political Communication», 147-162.

Guynn, J. (Feb 13, 2019). "If you've been harassed online, you're not alone. More than half of Americans say they've experienced hate". *USA Today*.

Habermas, J. (1962). The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society. Cambridge Polity Press.

Habermas, J., Lennox, F. & Lennox, S. (1964). *The Public sphere: An encyclopedia article.* New German Critique (3), 49-55.

Habermas, J. (1991). The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society. Cambridge: the MIT Press.

Heywood, A. (2007). *Politics.* London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Helsingin kaupunki. (2019). Osallistuva budjetointi. https://www.hel.fi/helsinki/fi/kaupunki-ja-hallinto/osallistu-ja-vaikuta/vaikuttamiskanavat/osallisuus-ja-vuorovaikutusmalli/osallistuva-budjetointi/ 5.12.2019

Kansalaisaloite.fi. (2019). https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/ohjeet 30.10.2019

Martens, B., Aguiar, L., Gomez-Herrera, E. & Muelle-Langer, F. (2018). *The digital transformation of news media and the rise of disinformation and fake news*. JRC Technical Reports. JRC Digital Economy Working Paper 2018-02. European union.

Meyer, H. (2017). Understanding the digital revolution and what it means (blog), published Jul 06, 2017. https://www.oecd-forum.org/users/52524-henning-meyer/posts/17957-understanding-the-digital-revolution-and-what-it-means

Ministry of Justice, Finland. (2017). Working group: risks of online voting outweigh its benefits; press release 19.12.2017.

Ministry of Justice, Finland. (2017). *Online voting in Finland – feasibility study* 19.12.2017, summary.

OmaStadi. (2019). Tuo ideasi ja äänesi kuuluviin. https://omastadi.hel.fi

Shah, A. (2007). *Participatory budgeting. Washington*, D.C.: World Bank.

Setälä, M, & Schiller, T. (2012). Citizens' Initiatives in Europe: Procedures and Consequences of Agenda-setting by Citizens. United States, Palgrave Macmillan.

Spence, M. (2019). *The "Digital Revolution" of Wellbeing.* Project Syndicate, Jun 28, 2019.

Sunstein, C. (2017). #Republic. Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Tikkala, H. (18.10.2019), Analyysi: Suostumus-kansalaisaloite tuskin etenee sellaisenaan eduskunnassa - ongelmana lapsiin kohdistuva seksuaalinen väkivalta. *Yle*. https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-11026450

Tikkala, H. (2019). Nettiäänestäminen ei ole etenemässä tällä vaalikaudella – "Vanhaan järjestelmään eivät pääse vieraat valtiot vaikuttamaan. *Yle news* 16.7.2019 https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-10880010

Väestörekisterikeskus. (2019). https://vrk.fi/en/finnish-citizens-initiative 30.10.2019