

The Do It Yourself State

The future of participatory democracy

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Abstract. This paper starts with the observation that liberal and discursive perspectives have been dominant in academic analyses of the role of technology in the future of democracy. The perspective of democracy as a participatory practice is largely ignored by academic investigations of electronic democracy. This paper argues that new technologies increasingly enable citizens to organize their own forms of public value production in a Do It Yourself (DIY) State: governance without government. The DIY State should not be seen as utopia. Although the DIY State may reflect the hippy ideal of a supportive community, it could also take the form of a ‘jungle’ where only the fittest survive. A further understanding of this form of democracy, of the way it is affected by new technologies, and of the remaining role for government, is needed to inform public debate and practices.

Keywords: E-democracy, participatory democracy

1. Introduction

Will the future bring us more democratic societies? The ideal of a digital Athens has been prominently present in all debates about the relation between new technologies and government [13,16,26,43,45,48]. Scholars have been discussing the idea that citizens could participate directly in processes of policy- and decision-making through digital networks. Many analyses focus on formal political processes and ideas about either a liberal or discursive democracy have dominated analyses of the future of democracy. The liberal ideal is that democratic decision-making is the best reflection of individual preferences [46] and new technologies are expected to enable the realization of this ideal through Internet polls and referendums and better informed voting by streamlining information about representatives. The deliberative ideal is that democracy is realized through a Habermassian public debate in which all arguments are brought forward and discussed. Deliberative democracy is to result in a public weighing of a diversity of arguments. Again, the expectations concerning the contribution of new technologies to democracy are high: through a variety of blogs, websites and social media, citizens can participate in public debates and engagement of citizens can be strengthened considerably.

Important as these strands of research and discussion may be, they miss out on an important form of democracy: citizens engaging directly in the solution of societal problems and the production of public benefits. Citizens are cooperating with government actors in the implementation of policies in a variety of policy domains such as safety and the environment and they are even starting to organize their own ‘commons’ such as Wikipedia and Linux without any government involvement [5,44,53]. In these practices, citizens are not using technology to elect better representatives or improve democratic debates but to realize societal solutions and produce public benefits [10, p. 541]. These forms of participation seem promising since they attract large numbers of citizens and result in new forms of cooperation

between state and citizens. The type of participation is different and could be conceptualized in terms of a 'participatory democracy' [2,21,42].

This paper will develop a rather provocative perspective on the future of democracy: I will highlight that new technologies increasingly enable citizens to organize their own forms of public value production. The state may no longer be needed to the extent that it was needed before and new 'commons' are of increasing importance. The liberal – or anarchistic – ideal of a small state and a 'big society' comes closer. I would like to characterize this type of democracy as the 'do-it-yourself-state': democracy does not take the shape of a better elucidation of individual preferences or more sophisticated public debate but rather the form of direct realization of societal solutions and the production of public benefits by (communities of) citizens.

The argument in this paper is not that developments such as electronic voting, information about representatives, digital referendums and digital debates are not important. They clearly matter and they have an impact on democratic practices. The argument I would like to make is that there are other democratic practices – participatory practices – that are at least as important and they are not included in our academic analyses if our perspective on democracy is defined too narrowly. This paper follows a broader trend in Public Administration to focus on the implementation of public policies rather than public decision-making. Coproduction and co-creation of public policies are new patterns of behavior that are being facilitated by social media [17,33]. This essay will explore how the use of new technologies may transform practices of participatory democracy.¹

2. Three perspectives on democracy

2.1. *Focus on election processes: From indirect to direct democracy*

Elections and influence of voters on public decision-making processes are often regarded as the key features of modern democracies. A first dominant issue in research into the effect of new technologies on democracy is to what extent indirect democracies can or will be replaced by direct democracies [9, pp. 31–32][14,48,54]. Since the 1970, academics have been talking about 'push-button democracy': due to decreased communication costs, citizens can easily be asked to vote on issues and the value of interest representation through indirect democracy diminishes. Not everybody thinks this is a desirable scenario. An interesting provocative analysis of this 'push-button democracy' is presented by Van Zoonen [56] who highlights that citizens' ideas about voting are being eroded by the fact that they are voting in fan communities for a host of television programs such as Big Brother and Pop Idol.

A second issue is the quality of representation: new technologies enable citizens to make a better selection of interest representation through more information about past performance and party programs [8, 20]. Representation is not replaced by direct democracy but strengthened through better provision of information. Overviews of voting behavior of representatives and analyses of party programs increase the transparency of representation and therefore stimulate a better fit between representation and people's interests. At the same time, this diminishes the autonomy of these representatives and arguably brings indirect democracy closer to the ideal of a direct democracy.

¹This paper builds upon three sources: (1) literature about different forms of democracy, (2) literature about electronic democracy and (3) the author's own empirical research. A relatively large amount of self-referencing reflects the fact that this paper presents a reflection on the empirical research the author has been involved in over the past years.

The focus on elections and representation of citizens' interest is based on a liberal or representative conception of democracy [6,15]. Key principles of liberal democracies are free and fair elections and a competitive political process. The principal proponent of this model of democracy is Joseph Schumpeter who presents the following definition of democracy: 'The democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of competitive struggle for the people's vote' [32,46]. The basic idea in this perspective on democracy is that the democratic system should be able to aggregate individual interests of citizens. In that sense, this perspective is basically individualistic in nature: individual interests form the input for democratic processes.

Informed voting behavior and a high voter turn-out are desirables in this model of democracy. Voter turn-out is seen as a crucial indicator of the state of democracy and a decline in turn-out is regarded as a problem. Additionally, this model highlights that voters should be able to select those leaders that represent their interests best and, consequently, voter education and information are important to the quality of democracy. Voters should be able to assess and analyze their leaders' past performance and promises to make an adequate selection of new leaders [18].

Research into the impact of new technologies on election processes has a long tradition [22,50]. There is a long debate about electronic and distance voting and, interestingly, practices have hardly been established. In the Netherlands, voting machines have even been criticized and paper-based voting has been reintroduced. At the same time, provision of information about representatives and their programs has increased drastically and the new media provide an important new reservoir of information for voters [8,20]. There is an ideal of rational decision-making underlying this model: better information is supposed to lead to more rational voting behavior and, consequently, to better representation. New media are even regarded as the answer to the mass media that cherish 'sound bite politics'. The power of the mass media is increasingly challenged by the communicative potential of the Internet (blogs, Facebook, Twitter). This potential plays a key role in an analysis of democracy as a discursive practice.

2.2. Focus on debates: From opinion leaders to individual debates

The liberal conception of democracy has been criticized for being too narrow in its focus [3,15]. The liberal conception takes citizens' interests as a given and pays no attention to the process of interest formation through interactions and public debate. Barber [3] highlights that we need to study democracy from a broader perspective and also focus on public debates in the media and other domains. In the deliberative model of democracy, deliberation, rather than voting, is regarded as the central mechanism for political decision-making. On the basis of a review of the literature, my colleague Michels [38, p. 475] identifies the following characteristics of the deliberative democracy model: democracy is decision-making by means of arguments and the deliberative process assumes free public reasoning, equality, inclusion of different interests, and mutual respect. The willingness to engage in debate is crucial: Graham [23] emphasizes that coherence, continuity, reciprocity, reflexivity, and empathy are normative conditions of the process of deliberation.

Ideas about deliberative democracy build upon Habermas' [24] understanding of democratic processes as communication processes. Habermas argues for open communication to realize better – more legitimate – forms of public decision-making. He builds his theory of deliberative democracy on the basis of the 'discourse principle': a rule of action or choice is justified, and thus valid, only if all those affected by the rule or choice could accept it in a reasonable discourse. He refers to practices of public debate in coffee houses in London and Vienna at the end of the 19th century as democratic practices and open communication.

In modern societies, public debates were generally carried out between opinion leaders who could voice their opinions through the mass media. The new media enable every individual to present his or her opinion through a blog, a tweet or a Facebook posting. The mass media have lost their central position in political debates through processes of ‘disintermediation’ [19]: individuals can easily and at low costs communicate with large groups of people. Lively debates take place on forums and – although our scientific understanding of these debates is still limited [15] – some argue that Habermas’ ideal of the debate in the coffeehouse is reemerging in the information age. This debate may take place in forums run by government (that are seemingly unrelated to politics such as the ‘wife swap forum’) [23].

Not everybody is optimistic about the contribution of new media to deliberative democracy. Sunstein [49, pp. 80–84] highlights the risks of ‘cybercascades’, fast diffusion of hearsay and bizarre stories through social media and my colleague Bovens [9, p. 36] highlights that the use of new media can result in a ‘balkanization’ of public debate. Citizens may choose to only discuss political issues and developments with like-minded citizens and public debate will become fragmented. Others argue that public debate may take place but lose nuance. Netizens tend not be nuanced in their argumentation and web forums could turn into ‘sound byte sites’ [51]. In that sense, new media could even help mass media to hollow out discursive democracy.

2.3. Focus on practices: From government-steering to self-government

While liberal and discursive democracy model focus on representation and debate, participatory democracy models highlight actual citizen engagement [25,34,42]. Boyte [10, p. 538] identifies Alexis De Tocqueville as the godfather of participatory democracy since he put the focus of his analysis not on government but on citizen agency. While the liberal and deliberative model stipulate a rather restrictive model of political decision-making, modern perspectives on participatory democracy extend the domain of political decision-making to areas such as the workplace and local communities and ‘public work’ [10]. Pateman [42] highlights that, in this perspective, self-government is seen as ideal. Society is seen as an association of individuals and there is an emphasis on equality and consensus. Participation and not representation is emphasized. Boyte [10, p. 538] highlights that citizens are not (only) seen as voters but (also) as problem solvers and cocreators of public goods.

Participatory democracy is not specific to the information age and has a long history. In the US, citizens have been involved in the management of schools, hospitals and housing corporations for a long time [10]. Newer forms of participatory democracy in the US include the involvement of citizens in fighting ‘crime and grime’ in their neighborhoods by cleaning up garbage and create oversight in unsafe situations [7]. In the Netherlands, protection against floods and other forms of water management are the quintessential forms of participatory democracy in the Netherlands. Citizens are involved through words but also action in the protection against floods and ensuring effective and equitable access to water [39].

Participation may be invited by government through various citizen engagement initiatives but participation may also be started by citizens. In a previous paper I have shown that there are three different types of participatory practices: political participation, policy participation and social participation [37]. Political participation is the classical form of participation which focuses on influencing agenda-setting and decision-making. Governments may ask citizens for input or comments on proposals and my analysis shows that there is a variety of initiatives on the Internet to stimulate or protest against certain political actions. Policy participation concerns citizen input in government policies either when they are invited by governments or on their own initiative (e.g. when citizens expose child offenders). Social participation is about citizens creating mutual support through advice but also by building public goods such as the

Internet together [10, p. 544]. Consequently, some forms of social participation can be conceptualized as democratic practices since they result in the production and distribution of public values and Boyte [10] refers to these practices as ‘public work’.

The dominant issue in participatory democracy is to what extent governments actually grant citizens real control [1]. More recent analyses – using theories on common pool resources as their basis [53] – take this issue one step further and raise the question to what extent citizens need a government to produce public value. The basic idea is that citizens can also interact in communities to produce public value such as safety and clean neighborhoods. Government is presented as something that is only needed when citizens are not capable of organizing the production of public values by themselves and since new technologies facilitate collective action the need for government is reduced.

2.4. Participatory democracy: An omitted domain

The three perspectives provide additional conceptualizations of democracy and one needs all three of them – and probably even some other perspectives as well – to understand democracy. Democracy is not only about voting, about debate or about practice but about all three of these. Voting, debate and practice provide different venues for citizen input in public value production and distribution. We as academics need to apply all these perspectives.

A review of the literature shows us that much has been written about the meaning of new technologies for liberal democracies. Many publications focus on the effects of new technologies on voting behavior and on the behavior of elected leaders. There is also a substantial body of literature about practice of deliberative democracy and the communicative potential of the new media is increasingly investigated. The (im)possibilities of public debate and the nature of this debate in electronic forums has been investigated by a substantial group of researchers. Practices of participatory democracy have been investigated but often in a rather narrow sense: there has been a strong focus on political participation. Policy and social participation have largely been ignored or they have not been studied as democratic practices.

The lack of attention for attention for policy and social participation can be attributed to the way democracy is being framed. Participatory forms of democracy have been studied but are often not analyzed as democratic practices. If democracy is being framed as input in government decision-making, policy participation and social participation may be ignored. A study of traditional political participation may help to understand why a railway was or was not constructed but to understand the construction of informational infrastructures or public goods such as LINUX and Wikipedia, we need a broader concept of democracy. Democracy is about ‘power to the people’ and self-determination and people may be capable of developing their own structures of self-determination. This paper applies such a broader concept to explore the present state and the future of (grassroots) democracy.

3. From Arnstein’s ladder to a democratic continuum

Participatory democracy covers a broad and varied set of practices. Democratic practices can be differentiated in terms of the role that government and citizens play in these interactions. Sherry Arnstein [1] has developed a ‘ladder of participation’ to distinguish the various levels of citizen participation ranging from non-participation (manipulation, therapy) through tokenism (informing, consultation, placation) to citizen power (partnership, delegated power, citizen control). Arnstein focuses on power as a key

issue and indicates that the degree to which power is shared with citizens varies and can be categorized accordingly.

Building upon Arnstein's [1] well known ladder of participation, Victor Bekkers and I have developed a model for categorizing practices of citizen engagement [4]. The key point that we make is that Arnstein's model only analyzes to what degree government is willing to share power with citizens. Vice versa, one can also analyze to what degree citizens are willing to share power with government. This situation may sound unlikely but the example of improving neighborhood safety can illustrate both Arnstein's model and our addition to it.

Non-participation in neighborhood safety could, according to Arnstein [1], consist of 'manipulation': explaining the government policy to citizens and hence 'educating' them. Alternatively, 'therapy' is a form of non-participation: citizens that complain about the safety in their neighborhood are invited to participate in therapeutic sessions about dealing with one's feelings of unsafety. Tokenism consists of informing, consulting or placating citizens: government can inform citizens about new safety and environmental policies and ask for their feedback or input or even let them select priorities. Citizen control consists of government agencies negotiating policies with citizens or even letting citizens run these public safety policies themselves (although, according to Arnstein [1], this never really takes place).

Our addition to the Arnstein model is that citizens can also create forms of non-participation, tokenism and government control. Non-participation can consist of citizens creating a neighborhood watch and using political manipulation to force government not to interact with this initiative. Tokenism can consist of citizens informing the local police about this neighborhood watch and maybe even ask a local police officer for his input in their plans. Government control would consist of letting the local police manage the safety of this neighborhood. The key point of the Bekkers-Meijer model is that citizens are not powerless subjects who may or may not receive some power from government but they are also political subjects who engage in various degrees of power sharing.

This continuum enables us to reformulate the question of what the future of (participatory) democracy will be. The question now becomes what shifts we can expect in terms of the democratic continuum. Will we see more citizen control, more government control or more partnership? To analyze these questions, we need to understand the character of technology.

4. New technologies lower transaction costs of democracy

Technological characteristics are important to understanding the development of democracy in an information age. New opportunities to present, divulge and analyze information play a key role in understanding the meaning of new technologies for liberal democracies. Voting is expected to rely on rational information processing and, hence, more comprehensive and accessible information is expected to contribute to the quality of democracy. For deliberative democracy, the communicative potential of the new technologies is crucial. The new media create new opportunities to conduct discussions and debates with large groups of people. Participatory democracy benefits from the new opportunities to organize collective action: developing a large scale system such as LINUX or Wikipedia is facilitated by structured, electronic systems.

How can we understand this value of new technologies for participatory democracy? Helpful here is the wide variety of papers and books on new forms of cooperation through social media. I would like to use Shirky's [47] work to analyze important mechanisms. His key argument is that new media enable social groups to overcome preexisting restrictions of time and cost. Translated to participatory democracy, this means that citizens can develop democratic practices that would cost too much time and

money without these media. A brilliant example is how citizens in China have been able to develop means of retrieving lost or abducted children by publishing photos on social networks [30].

The idea of restrictions is developed on the basis of a thorough analysis of Coase's [12] work on the 'nature of the firm'. Coase argues that organizations are being formed to overcome transaction costs. Shirky [47] highlights that transaction costs result in a floor for institutions since, for certain activities, the transaction costs are too high for an institution form to pursue this activity. The activity may be valuable to individuals but organizing it in the form of an institution creates too many transaction costs. Here the value of social media comes into the equation: social media lower the transaction costs and therefore institutions can be formed that enable the coordination of these activities. Shirky [47] mentions Flickr as an example since the medium allows individuals to organize around themes of images without the transaction costs of managerial oversight.

Shirky's [47] analysis is directly relevant for practices of participatory democracy since difficulties of scale are often mentioned in relation to participatory democracy in modern societies. Liebmann [31, p. 337,339] analyzed the co-production model in the context of effective models of democracy and concludes that 'the size of contemporary municipalities is inconsistent with a significant degree of direct civic participation of the town-meeting model (. . .) (D)ecentralization will not achieve the town meeting ideal of participatory democracy unless the community involved is extremely small'. He concludes that this model needs to be applied in a small local setting and is suitable for specific, local issues. Combining these analyses, one could argue that the new media enable citizens to scale up their local practices and create citywide, regional, national or even global practices of participatory democracy. Participatory practices are facilitated by new technologies.

The best known examples of large scale practices of participatory democracy in terms of direct production of public values are Wikipedia and LINUX. These practices have been studied by a variety of researchers [28,29,41,44] and they highlight that the new media help to establish new patterns of interactions that result in robust public facilities. In a previous paper with some colleagues, I have shown that the set of participatory practices is much broader [37]. Citizens set up forums to discuss all kinds of (public) issues and they present each other with advice ranging from weaving materials to parenting and even visiting prostitutes. The most far reaching form of participation is probably the construction of new worlds in environments such as Second Life and Farmville. Not all participatory practices are new and radically different from what we had before. New technologies also play a key role in facilitating interactions between patients and students. Traditional, offline forms of participatory democracy are supplemented with new platforms such as PatientsLikeMe and RateMyProfessor.

These mediated practices of citizen participation are radically different from the 'neat' voting practices studied by academics interested in liberal democracies and the analyses of public debates on websites by scholars interested in discursive democracy. Should these practices be understood as democratic practices? One could argue that these practices are closer to the ideal of a 'digital Athens' since, similar to citizens in ancient Greece, citizens in modern states are directly involved in the production of public value. Wikipedia and LINUX show us that citizens do not need governments to organize collective action and produce public facilities. Is that the future of democracy? Are we heading for the end of government? This may be one possible future but in the next paragraph I will also discuss other futures.

5. Three futures of participatory democracy

On the basis of our democratic continuum and the discussion of characteristics of new technologies we can now sketch different possible futures for democracy. I will develop three scenarios which vary

from no citizen participation to power sharing between government and citizens to citizen control. These scenarios do not exclude one another and they could be realized in parallel in different countries, in different domains and even in the same domain.

The first scenario is that government does not need citizens anymore. The trajectory comes close to the Big Brother dystopia [16]. One can imagine that technology facilitates government functions and it will need citizens less and less to perform its functions. Basically this trajectory means the end of participatory democracy since government no longer needs citizen participation. One can think of a government that attempts to collect comprehensive information about criminal activities (e.g. [52]) so that it can rely on its own data and no longer needs information from witnesses. Comprehensive forms of data collection about pollution, public safety, education, etc. could diminish the need for citizen engagement since an 'all-knowing government' does not need citizens for providing specific information.

There is no participatory democracy in this scenario and, therefore, liberal and discursive democracy perspectives are crucial. Citizens are not invited to provide information that could challenge government's knowledge base and neither are they involved in the implementation of actions. The influence on the implementation of government policies is nil. Public decision-making and public accountability are the only checks on the abuse of power and strong legal frameworks are needed to curtail government and to prevent the creation of a panopticon.

The second scenario is that we will develop elaborate forms of government-citizen production. This trajectory stipulates that new technologies will facilitate government-citizen interactions and, therefore, coproduction is widely stimulated. Recent work on the coproduction of safety and public services through new media seems to provide some support for this scenario. Fix My Street is a prime example of how citizens detect failures or defects and inform governments so that they know where to allocate their resources [27]. In my research into new media and coproduction, I have shown that police departments in the Netherlands are using new media to engage large groups of citizens in the coproduction of safety and public services [35]. The new media enable governments to reach and engage citizens in a structured manner and at a limited cost and hence break down practical barriers to citizen participation in the production of government policies.

Participatory democracy is important in this scenario since government activities are influenced and conditioned by citizen engagement. Important issues are the representativeness of the group of citizens that is engaged and the nature of their input. My research in the Netherlands into the use of new media for the coproduction of safety shows that mainly white, middle-aged men are involved in the coproduction of safety and, hence, black teenagers may have limited opportunities for self-determination [35].

The third, most controversial, scenario is that citizens no longer need government. New technologies open up the way for self-government. Citizens find ways to interact and govern public resources and tackle public problems. They can set up models for organizing the public safety and environmental quality of their neighborhoods, organize their own education and even redistribute wealth. Government basically comes to an end and new, networked forms of interactions replace preexisting formal government structures: LINUX as a model for world government.

The last scenario raises important questions about the effectiveness and the legitimacy of these networks. Power is distributed in these networks but this does not necessarily mean that it is distributed in an equitable manner. While proponents conceptualize the 'do-it-yourself-state' as a supportive community, critics depict it as a 'jungle'. A 'digital divide' may prevent access to these new networks of power for certain groups [40]. Self-determination may also take the form of violence as we have seen during the 2011 riots in London. Traditional checks and balances are lacking and new ones may be needed. The final paragraph of this paper will develop this scenario further and it will present an analysis for normative and empirical analysis of the future of democracy.

6. Do-It-Yourself State

Governance without governments can be characterized as the ‘do-it-yourself-state’.² The term ‘do-it-yourself’ was first used in the US in the 1950s in relation to home improvement to refer to people building, modifying, or repairing of their houses without the aid of experts or professionals (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Do_it_yourself). Do-it-yourself became popular as an approach for young people to renovate affordable, rundown older homes. The idea was given a broader meaning in the late 1960s when it was connected to social and environmental visions such as growing your own vegetables and creating your own communities and gained a central position in lifestyle of the hippy movement. The punk movement applied the idea of ‘do-it-yourself’ to music and they emphasized that everybody – even Sid Vicious – could make their own music. In the 1970 and 1980, ‘do-it-yourself’ was the ideal of the squatter movements in both the US and Europe. Their idea of ‘do-it-yourself’ was that citizens would not need a government to govern them: the production of goods but also of safety and justice was to be carried out by communities of citizens.

The ‘do-it-yourself-state’ is not only popular in leftwing (hippy, squatter) circles but is recognized and discussed in much broader circles. Although the idea of self-governance is old and, in the US, crosses party lines [10, p. 539], it is now primarily used by conservatives to argue for a smaller government. The American Tea Party movement favors the ‘do-it-yourself’ state as they argue for less government and more citizen initiative in welfare, education and healthcare. A similar perspective is observed across the Atlantic Ocean where the ‘do-it-yourself’ state also seems to be the ideal of the UK conservative government. Prime Minister David Cameron refers to Big Society as a society in which government has a limited role and citizens take care of themselves and each [11].

How can we understand that the idea of the DIY State is now propagated by such diverse groups as left-wing anarchists and squatters and right-wing conservatives? This similarity can probably be understood on the basis of the observation that freedom plays a key role in both ideologies. Both want to restrict the power of the state but for different reasons. Left-wing groups feel that the state is an instrument for the ruling elite that limits processes of emancipation whereas right-wing conservatives argue that the state is an instrument of change and a threat to existing power structures. For left-wing ideologists the ‘do-it-yourself’ state challenges existing power structures whereas for right-wing ideologists the ‘do-it-yourself’ state is the natural form of existing structures (e.g. the Tea Party’s idea of the ‘God’s Given America’). The key difference between the two seems to be their perspective on empowerment: left-wing ideologists see the ‘do-it-yourself’ state as an instrument for empowerment whereas right-wing ideologists do not see a need for empowerment since this would challenge the existing order.

The key issue for the ‘do-it-yourself’ state is who the actors are that will dominate networks of power. Who are included and excluded [10]? Both left-wing and right-wing ideologists argue that the common citizen should assume this role but their perspective on other interests is different. Left-wing ideologists argue against the role of corporate interests and in favor of grassroots movements. Right-wing ideologists see corporate interests as a form of citizen interests and hence these interests are free to play a role in the governance of public spaces. Put differently: left-wing ideologists argue in favor of civil society whereas right-wing ideologists plea for less restrictions of the market.

²In a similar argument about broadening our idea of democracy, Boyte [10] characterizes the shifting paradigm as one from a ‘democratic state’ to a ‘democratic society’. I have chosen to maintain the word ‘state’ but I broadened its meaning to encompassing the activities of (communities of) citizens aimed at the production of public benefits and do work with what Boyte labels as a ‘state-centered framework’.

The ideal of the ‘do-it-yourself’ state has also met with much criticism. The main line of critique is that the emerging networks of power may only represent specific private interests and they may not be capable of producing public value for everyone [10, p. 537]. Weaker interests such as the environment and the interests of minorities may not be protected. Solidarity with the less fortunate may be absent when networks of powerful interests mainly aim to propagate their own interests. To meet these forms of criticism, government needs to come back into the equation and it needs to assume a ‘process responsibility’: government no longer needs to produce public value but it needs to ensure that public value is being produced for everyone in a ‘commonwealth’ of citizens [36].

The future of democracy will have a layered and multi-dimensional character. Democracy will (remain to) consist of representative, deliberative and participatory practices. The DIY State is not the only form the state will assume but I have argued that this form will become more salient. The DIY State is no utopia: the future will show whether it will take the character of a ‘jungle’ or of a ‘supportive community’. One could argue that the struggle over the nature of the ‘do-it-yourself’ state is a key issue for the future of democracy and merits at least as much attention as analyses of representative democracies and digital debates. How is power distributed in citizen initiatives? Do we see forms of empowerment or elite domination? How is the right to and the actual ability for self-determination distributed? For our understanding of the future of democracy, a better understanding of Linux (and Wikipedia, Wikileaks, etc.) may be more important than analyses of electronic voting and digital debates.

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