

Digital Participation: Lessons from practical experiences



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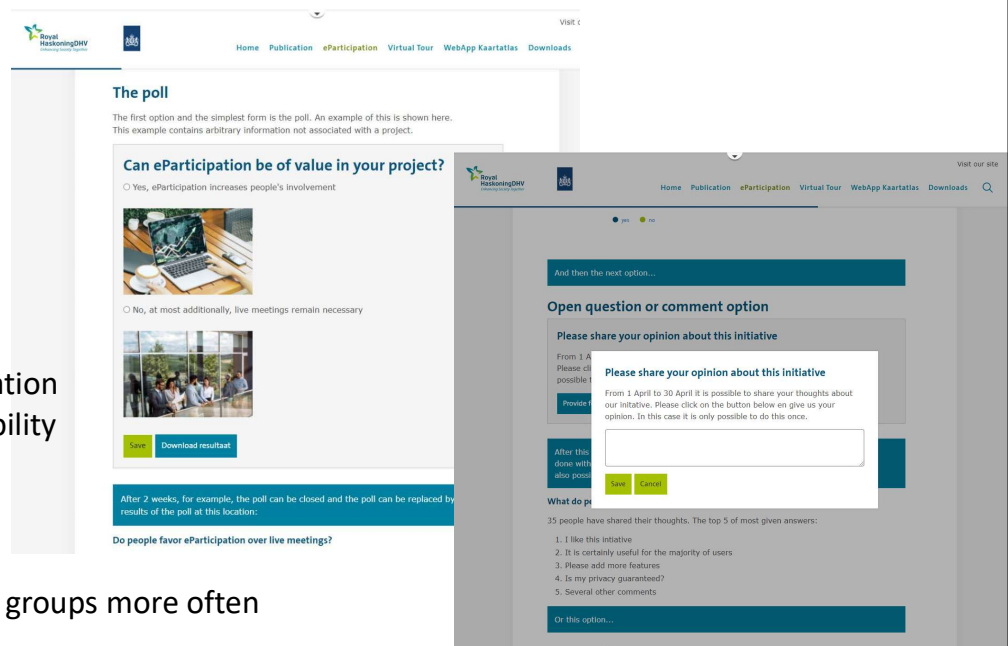
The world is changing, and so are the ways we participate in government projects. In recent years, digital participation has emerged as a powerful tool for involving stakeholders in government projects. By leveraging the internet, we can engage with a wider audience and make participation more accessible than before.

In a study we explored, together with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, the impact of digital participation on government projects. Our research focused on the practical experiences of nine projects in the spatial domain.

- Accessible information
- Continuous availability



Reach broader target groups more often



Our findings were clear: digital participation can make a positive contribution to participation processes of various projects in the spatial domain. By providing accessible information and continuous availability, digital participation can reach broader target groups more often. With a digital platform, project information and digital participation options are available in one, always accessible place.

But digital participation is not a replacement for regular participation. Instead, it can strengthen regular participation by providing a new way to retrieve information that can be presented in regular meetings for further discussion or that can be used as a basis for co-creation meetings.

- Thorough preparation
- Transparency about goal and use of results
- Clear communication



Digital consultation room
from one of the projects

To make digital participation successful, we identified three preconditions: thorough preparation, transparency about the goal and the use of results (feedback to the public), and clear communication so people know they can participate digitally. By following these preconditions, digital participation can be a valuable tool for government projects.

Challenges of Digital Participation



However, digital participation is not without its challenges. Although it can be quickly set up and implemented, preparation takes time and effort, just as is the case with regular participation. If that time cannot be taken, there is a risk that it will not lead to the desired result. In addition, the privacy of people must be taken into account, and it is sometimes necessary to moderate people's responses before they are posted online.



So much for the lessons learned from practice. To conclude, here is an example of one of the nine projects. During the construction of a harbor, a digital museum was set up as part of the participation to inform people about finds made during the excavation of the harbor. The harbor has since been completed. The municipality has now taken over the digital museum. Hikers and cyclists in the area are still informed about the history of the area via a QR code. In this way, this aspect of participation remains valuable even after the project, for informing visitors to the area.



Let's continue the conversation!

Message me your questions or comments in the IAIA26 app.

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