

# Do-ocracy's democratic anchorage

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## Abstract

In this paper we point to a new form of democracy which can be labelled 'do-ocracy'. Do-ocracy refers to active citizens who wish to contribute to the public domain by simply doing things instead of voting, deliberating or negotiating. Do-ocracy often manifests itself on the neighbourhood or the local level, is problem oriented, and thus pragmatist by nature. The purpose of the paper is to develop democratic norms to assess the democratic anchorage of do-ocracy. We argue for applying 'pragmatist criteria' to do-ocracy such as symbolic representation, horizontal story based forms of accountability, and reciprocity instead of equality. We suggest that these criteria should always be in place and depending on the type of institutional involvement in do-ocracy one may add classical criteria such as descriptive representation, and light forms of accountability based on counting.

Keywords: do-ocracy, pragmatism, symbolic representation, horizontal accountability, reciprocity.

## Introduction

Active citizenship has been the buzzword among politicians and policy makers of western welfare states since the ninety nineties (Newman & Tonkens 2011, Marinetto 2003, Crick & Lockyer 2010). Activation policies were aimed at engaging citizens in democratic forms of participation for several reasons: to redress the fragmentation of the public sector after neoliberal reforms (Bevir 2010), to deal with crises in public institutions (Fung 2004), to compensate for declining turnout in elections (Akkerman et al. 2004), to improve public services, and to tackle social exclusion and other wicked problems (Sullivan & Skelcher 2002, Pollitt 2003, Bevir 2010). Dealing with these issues lead to the invention of neighbourhood governance (Lowndes & Sullivan 2008), empowered participatory governance (Fung & Wright 2003), participatory budgeting (Sintomer et al. 2008), interactive policy making (Akkerman et al. 2004, Denters & Klok 2005), and local partnerships (Sullivan & Skelcher 2002, Lowndes & Sullivan 2008).

All these inventions were localized in 'mini-publics' in which citizens are gathered in 'discrete bodies to discuss or decide matters of public concern' (Fung 2006: 68). Expectations of citizen participation in these mini-publics were high, hoping that citizens would become more empowered, more engaged in public problems, more understanding of other citizens, and of the complexity of governing. It would allow them to develop bridging and linking social capital and

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provide them with a Tocquevillian learning school for democracy (Putnam 2000, Szreter 2002). Results of these democratic innovations have been mixed. Some studies show successful practices of, for example, participatory budgeting, citizens deliberating police deployment (Fung 2004, Fung & Wright 2003), and deliberative opinion polls (Fishkin & Luskin 2005). Other studies indicated problems with representation of citizens, lack of responsiveness by government, ritualistic practices not granting citizens any real power (Jones 2003, Gallent & Robinson 2012, Van Stokkom 2006), and reproduction of existing power relations in language (Metze 2010, Dryzek 2010).

The popularity of these deliberative practices does not imply that democratic innovation has come to a standstill. On the contrary, amidst these developments we see an increasing (policy) attention for a form of direct democracy, which can be labelled ‘do-ocracy’. The concept of do-ocracy refers to active citizens who wish to contribute to the public domain by simply doing things instead of voting, deliberating or negotiating (Van de Wijdeven 2012). Citizens influence the public domain by, for example, restructuring the local playground, setting up housework classes for deprived children, or developing art projects to enhance the neighbourhood. These forms of do-ocracy are not apolitical; rather political action such as reflecting on practices or discussing what to do next is highly informal and functional to ‘doing’. Do-ocracy not only refers to developments in civil society, it is also employed as a policy concept. Dutch politicians and policy makers have embraced practises of do-ocracy as a solution to social problems which needs to be enabled as much as possible, whilst at the same time they need to see to it that citizens behave democratically amongst themselves.

Both practices of and policy interest in do-ocracy raise substantial questions about democratic anchorage and legitimacy: Who do these doers represent? What interests do they serve? Who holds them accountable? This paper focuses on the democratic anchorage of do-ocracy by asking two questions: What is do-ocracy? and What kind of conceptual apparatus do we need to assess the democratic anchorage of do-ocracy? To answer these questions we will first unpack the concept of do-ocracy and introduce two varieties: the bottom-up spontaneous form and the top-down stimulated form. Subsequently, we will develop two theoretical forms of democratic anchorage of do-ocracy and theoretically argue and empirically illustrate that do-ocracy demands a new approach – that we will call pragmatist democratic anchorage of doing – to evaluate the democratic value of do-ocracy.

## **The concept of do-ocracy**

In the Netherlands ‘do-ocracy’ (in Dutch: ‘doe-democratie’) is the new buzzword. The concept of do-ocracy as coined (in Dutch) by Ted van de Wijdeven and Frank Hendriks (2010) adds a fourth mode to the three dominant modes of decision-making as distinguished by Elster (1998) – voting, deliberating and negotiating. That fourth mode is ‘doing’. The term do-ocracy is also mentioned by Katherine Chen (2009) as the dominant logic of organization behind the Burning Man event. The (small) group of organizers of Burning Man have authority in making decisions in certain matters, but they explicitly urge event participants to take action themselves, particularly in initiating and carrying

out projects and activities. Over the years the event grew organically into an organization with more than two thousand volunteers working together in a do-ocracy. “Under a ‘do-ocracy’, individuals can launch an activity or project that addressed a ‘civic need’” (Chen 2009: 55). Chen nicely point out some core element of do-ocracy: it involves citizens (doers) who are mainly interested in doing instead of deliberating and who are oriented on the public good and civic ends and needs.

Lots of citizens are actively and confidently participating in the (co-)creation of the public sphere through concrete action, as many Dutch studies highlight (Van de Wijdeven 2012, Metze 2006, Ketelaars & Metze 2012, Tonkens & Verhoeven 2012, Denters et al. 2012, Hendriks & Tops 2005). These (qualitative) studies show that citizens in the local context are trying to (inter-)actively and (co-) productively make their neighbourhoods a better place to live. Doing, for example, involves developing art projects for migrant children, organizing neighbourhood care for the elderly, or starting small energy cooperation’s on the neighbourhood level. Through these actions citizens influence the public sphere and provide public services.

Democracy refers to the people (demos) that govern (kratos). However, do-ocracy refers to the people governing by ‘doing’, through concrete action. If you want a clean street, just pick up a broom and do it; if you want more social cohesion, organize a social event; if the playground needs some painting, paint it together with your neighbours. Citizens that operate as do-ocrats try to solve tangible neighbourhood problems in practical and concrete ways by forming mini publics – although not primarily focussed on deliberation as in Fung’s original conception of mini publics (Fung 2006) –, similar to how pragmatist philosopher John Dewey (1927) conceptualized the relations between problems and publics. Doing rather than talking reflects the pragmatist nature of citizens involved in do-ocracy because these ‘doers’ know that showing can be more convincing than telling. Most of the time they do not wait for government action for the public good, but act themselves. They often act with (self) confidence, tackle local (public) problems themselves rather than asking government to do it, and they approach professional (government) actors as potential partners for cooperation, instead of seeing them as ‘the enemy’. These observations correspond with broader trends in citizenship that citizens are increasingly becoming ‘political do-it-your-selves’, or ‘bricoleurs’ that react to and tackle issues in their vicinity (Dekker et al. 2004, Verhoeven 2006).

Do-ocracy is not apolitical, it simply means that political action such as reflecting on practices or discussing what to do next is highly informal and functional to ‘doing’. It’s more like ‘politics as lived experience’ (Marsh et al. 2007) or ‘micro politics’ (Pattie et al. 2004), a politics of civil society that takes place in neighbourhood communities and associations of citizens (Stoker 2006) which keeps a distance from the politics of government. This is perhaps why in times of financial austerity government has developed a big interest in do-ocracy.

Recently, some important advisory boards of Dutch government have written reports on the growth of self-organization and how government can react to that. A central tenet of their advice is that government should become more supportive to the needs of do-it-themselves citizens and become

more modest in what it wants to accomplish by itself (Rob 2012, Wrr 2012, Rmo 2013). The Scientific Council for Government Policy (Wrr), for instance, advised Dutch government to show more trust in citizens' ability to participate and cooperate in the public sphere and collectively solve societal problems. The council sees a new generation of 'do-ocracy' appear, in addition to 'classical' forms of participation focusing on deliberative solutions to enhance legitimacy in policy-making. The scientific council organized an international conference on do-ocracy and published an online magazine on this topic entitled *Can democracy by doing deepen democracy?*<sup>2</sup>. Yet another Dutch advisory board, the Council for Public Administration (Rob), advised government and parliament to let go of their top-down control reflexes and instead organize more room for manoeuvre for active citizens (Rob 2012). Again: the advice is to 'show trust in citizens' as potential problem solvers in the public sphere. The importance of the topic of do-ocracy is underlined by the Dutch Cabinet which in June 2013 presented a white paper entitled *Do-ocracy, white paper to stimulate a vital society*. The Cabinet welcomes the ideas of the advisory boards and promises to increase the ability of all Dutch forms of government to connect with initiative in society, to provide more space for them, and to enable citizens to participate in them (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken 2013: 16).

### ***Varieties of do-ocracy***

Do-ocracy can take a variety of forms. It may range from physical actions such as cleaning the streets or setting up inner city vegetable gardens, to social actions such as organizing a monthly tea party for isolated elderly people. Many of these initiatives share a pragmatist view on dealing with public problems. However, within this hotchpotch of initiatives we can find two varieties of do-ocracy which function in distinct ways: bottom-up do-ocracy and top-down stimulated do-ocracy.

#### ***Bottom-up do-ocracy***

Bottom-up do-ocracy is itself a broad variety of grassroots initiatives which are born, raised and maintained by citizens. Let's have a look at two examples amongst many. The first example is the initiative of Tamara Sanichar and her neighbours. Tamara lives in the Brukske neighbourhood in Venray, a regular working to middle class neighbourhood. She is a young mother of three little children, and was annoyed about the dirty and unsafe state of the local playground. Together with two friends she managed to organise a group of 14 neighbours to tidy up the playground. Assisted by some working men of the municipality they replaced old benches around the playground. Neighbourhood children went from door to door to collect leftover paint and repainted the benches and some other parts of the playground in bright colours. The green patches in and around the playground were trimmed, the children collected garbage, and together with their parents cleaned up the place (Van de Wijdeven 2012, Oude Vrielink & Van de Wijdeven 2007).

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<sup>2</sup> [http://issuu.com/wetenschappelijkeraad/docs/2013-10-29\\_hivosisswrr\\_periodiek\\_04](http://issuu.com/wetenschappelijkeraad/docs/2013-10-29_hivosisswrr_periodiek_04)

Another example of spontaneous bottom-up initiative is the BOM-ReVa in the Dutch city of The Hague. BOM-ReVa is a neighbourhood development corporation in the Regentes-Valkenbos (ReVa) neighbourhood, established in 1992 to keep the neighbourhood intact and safe and to contribute urban (re)development. By organizing services such as the street-sweeping crew, paid for by eighty percent of the merchants in the area, the BOM-ReVa seeks to raise money which can be subsequently invested in neighbourhood development projects that require some investment (Hendriks & Tops 2005, Van de Wijdeven 2012). Typical for BOM-ReVa is that their plans develop during action, which calls the next project into being and thus causes a chain of projects. After the street sweeping project they started neighbourhood redevelopment projects: an old empty indoor swimming pool was bought and redeveloped into a neighbourhood theatre. In the BOM-ReVa case the active doers were perfectly capable of managing most of the issues, but once in a while got support from the alderman when the going got tough. An example is the idea to establish a tennis park in neighbourhood, which was decided by BOM-ReVa on a Thursday evening, designed by an architect overnight, submitted to the alderman on Friday morning, approved by him on Monday morning, after which the groundwork was laid within a few months. The new local tennis association (Break Point) was established and reached its maximum capacity of 400 members as early as the next year. Without the support of the alderman the realization of this plan would take much longer and an important part of the momentum would get lost.

These examples of bottom-up do-ocracy illustrate that some initiatives are very much focussed on a single issue and will evaporate as soon as the issue is solved (Tamara's initiative) while BOM-ReVa has been around for almost 25 years taking up a wider variety of issues. Both examples also illustrate some common points that can be found in many instance of bottom-up do-ocracy. First of all the focus in these grassroots initiatives is on the democratic relations among these active doers and on the relations between their mini-publics and other citizens not participating in them. Second, in most cases these initiatives have at best very light relations with government and other organizations involved in neighbourhood governance which take up a cooperative and supportive role. These types of weak ties can be found in many instances of bottom-up do-ocracy (Hurenkamp et al. 2012, Denters et al. 2012) and thus also imply a greater distance to representative democracy. Being in a supportive role does not require much political will formation and related forms of democratic control.

### *Top-down stimulated do-ocracy*

Top-down stimulated do-ocracy is an outcome of empowerment policies in deprived neighbourhoods as part of a broader process of social recapture. For the 2008-2011 period Dutch national government invested 95 million Euros in district budgets, meant to stimulate do-ocracy in the forty most deprived city districts of the Netherlands. The city of Amsterdam was on top of the list with twenty-four neighbourhoods and an available budget of 12,1 million Euros over four years. In-depth mixed method

research by Tonkens and Verhoeven (2012) on the Amsterdam case gives a pretty good impression of how top-down stimulated do-ocracy works.

Between September 2008 and June 2010 a total of 1211 initiatives successfully applied for district budgets. At the end of 2011 the total number reached over 2500 initiatives. Similar to bottom-up do-ocracy these initiatives cover a broad variety of issues and may be of a one-time kind or more may be more sustained over a longer period of time. A great number of these initiatives focussed on solving neighbourhood problems or problems within specific groups of inhabitants. An example of solving a neighbourhood problem can be found in the Eastern part of Amsterdam at the Afrikanerplein, a square which was occupied by drugs dealers, drug-addicts and other people involved in criminal activities. Jitske Hallema, one of the people living at the square, wanted to alter this situation by setting up a neighbourhood garden (Buurttuinen Transvaal) where people from the neighbourhood can come to grow flowers, vegetables and other greeneries. With support from Wouter Stoeken, a participation broker from the local government, Jitske Hallema developed a plan to redevelop the square and applied successfully for a district budget. She managed to get other neighbours involved and together with technical help in the design and by working men from the municipality the square was redeveloped into the neighbourhood garden. Drug dealers could not hide anymore in the bushes and, more importantly, many neighbours started to voluntarily work in the garden in order to keep it in good shape. People from the neighbourhood reclaimed public space and managed to drive out criminal activities and all problems that come with it (Mietus 2013). Examples of solving within specific groups of inhabitants can be found in Moroccan women starting a knitting club in order to get isolated Moroccan women out of their houses. In these clubs (there were many) women can share their problems at home and discuss solutions. Another example is setting up a clubhouse in Amsterdam Zuid-Oost where teenagers from mainly Surinamese and Antillean background can come to learn DJ-skills and enter rap competitions, in order to keep them off the streets.

All examples mentioned form an illustration of the predominantly social nature of the activities do-ocrats undertake with district budgets in deprived neighbourhoods. They are often driven by pragmatic and social motives and focus on creating meeting places, starting educational, cultural and sport related activities, in many cases directed at migrant children and teenagers (Tonkens & Verhoeven 2012: 45-50, 39-43). In many of these cases professionals play an important role informing citizens about the possibilities of these budgets, mobilizing them to take initiative, helping them to hand in a proposal for budget and sometimes also supporting them during their initiative, as in the case of the neighbourhood garden. Doers are very satisfied with the support they receive: on a scale from 0 to 10 the mean score of this satisfaction is 8,1, with 70 percent being very satisfied (scores 8-10) and 25 percent being satisfied (scores 6-7) (Tonkens & Verhoeven 2012: 55). Doers also develop a sense of partnership with government professionals. Government pays attention to them, takes them seriously in their efforts, and provides them with financial and other types of support. This of course

implies that top-down stimulated forms of do-ocracy develop strong(er) ties with local government and hence also with representative democracy which needs to allocate and control the spenditure of public money invested.

### *Do-ocracy on a continuum of government intervention*

Both bottom-up and top-down varieties of do-ocracy involve lighter or heavier forms of government intervention. Even the bottom-up variety in many cases does not manage its initiative without some kind of political, financial, or knowledge-based support from local government (Hurenkamp et al. 2012). Therefore we may situate do-ocracy on a continuum of government intervention which runs from no intervention at all toward government stimulating and financing initiatives. Governmental intervention may take more permanent forms or it may shift over time according to changing needs of initiatives and changing institutional demands. To perceive the relations between doers and government as a continuum has important implications for our focus on democratic anchorage. The stronger the government intervention, the more do-ocracy becomes entwined with representative democracy and the criteria for democratic anchorage that comes with it. The weaker the ties between do-ocracy and representative democracy, the stronger the need to assess do-ocracy on its own terms applying criteria of what we call pragmatist democratic anchorage of doing.

### **Democratic anchorage of do-ocracy**

Democratic anchorage of do-ocracy is problematic in terms of democracy theory. The concept and practices of do-ocracy challenge democratic criteria applicable to the aggregative model of democracy, such as representation, equality, and accountability. In the aggregative model democracy is based on majority rule and a parliamentary system to reach binding decisions. In this view democracy is the aggregation of represented interests (Schumpeter 1950). Do-ocracy is based on active citizenship: self-governing citizens take control over a small part of public problems. From this perspective democracy can be seen as an arrangement that realizes the ideal of self-government and that de-emphasizes the idea that democracy applies to reaching collective binding decisions. As such, do-ocracy it is closely related to deliberative models of democracy that are centred on the ideal of public reasoning and self-governance in mini publics (Fung 2006). Those mini publics contribute to a collaborative search for collectively acceptable solutions that are ‘mutually justifiable’ (Mansbridge et al. 2010). Democratic deliberation emphasizes procedural aspects and, therefore, should “somehow embody the essential democratic principles of responsiveness to public wishes and the political equality of every member of that public” (Parkinson 2003: 180).

However, there is an inherent quandary between the element of self-government in mini publics and collectiveness in deliberative models of democracy, that is also relevant for mini publics in do-ocracy. In the policy practice these dilemma’s become obvious. The self-governing citizens sometimes (need to) by-pass the aggregative democratic system or to ignore rules in order to be able to

take initiative, not for their own personal interests but in the interest of the public good of their neighbourhood (Van de Wijdeven 2012, Bakker et al. 2011, Denters et al. 2012). In that sense, do-ocracy comprises a Deweyan type of pragmatist governing, which is hard to acknowledge let alone legitimate, through mechanisms of aggregative (representative) democracy. Time and again the democratic legitimacy of do-ocracy is challenged: it is not transparent, representative, there are no checks and balances, the actions are not serving the public good but merely a small local group of people, what is the public good is not defined in a struggle of interests but determined by a group of outspoken citizens (Tonkens 2013). Problematic is first of all that do-ocracy requires democratic anchorage in the broader aggregative representative democracy in which it is nested and that it challenges this system at the same time. Second, do-ocracy needs to be democratically legitimated in its own terms.

Do-ocracy does not operate in an institutional vacuum and hence needs to be related to the normative values that stem from democracy theory, which are usually applied to aggregative democratic systems in general. In this 'classic approach' the collectiveness of democracy is emphasized and do-ocracy is embedded within the aggregative democratic system (e.g. representative democracy in the Netherlands) by its relations with governmental, welfare and care organizations. To be democratically anchored, do-ocracy needs to be (1) controlled by democratically elected politicians; (2) representing the membership basis of the participating groups and organizations (inclusive); (3) it needs to be accountable (transparent and responsive) to the territorially defined citizenry; and (4) the product of this network needs to be efficient and effective for the general public (see also Sørensen and Torfing 2005: 213). Applying these criteria to mini publics of do-ocrats would also demand that their initiatives (implicitly) follow the democratic rules specified by a particular grammar of conduct, such as transparency and reciprocity (Sørensen and Torfing 2005). This means that the network of participants (citizens, governmental actors, professionals, and entrepreneurs) is inclusive, that doing is democratic in the sense that voice, exit and entry are possible, that decision-making is transparent and responsible, and that the outcomes benefit not only self-interests but also the collectivity of the mini public.

However, when put into practice the classic normative criteria for democratic anchorage are already to some extent problematic by not taking into account the possibility of citizen's interactions and its inherent (political) cooperation due to its focus on relations between citizens and institutions (Dryzek 1990, Przeworski 2010). These classic norms become even more challenging when we take into account that do-ocracy is largely voluntary, pluri-centric and less or not at all grounded in the legal procedures of normal governing. Do-ocracy is justified by doing and light forms of negotiation, rather than by procedures or substance; and it depends on trust and (political) obligation (directly expressed consent) which, over time, become sustained by self-constituted rules and norms (Sørensen & Torfing 2005: 197-198, Levelt & Metze 2013). As such, possible critiques on democratic legitimacy and anchorage of do-ocracy resemble those of network-governance in which all sorts of actors



collaborate to improve, for example, challenged neighbourhoods or urban regions and are both less institutionalized and less formalized (Sørensen & Torfing 2005, Metze & Levelt 2012, Parkinson 2003).

Therefore, we introduce a pragmatist approach of democratic anchorage of do-ocracy next to the classic approach. The classic approach is applied to evaluate the democratic anchorage of do-ocracy in aggregative systems: how the mini publics relate to the formal structures in place. In addition, the pragmatist approach to democratic anchorage develops criteria to evaluate the mini publics in their own terms. In a pragmatist approach democratic legitimacy is centred on the action element of democracy. This alters the way we think about the democratic norms and values pertaining to do-ocracy and how these can be assessed (by researchers, politicians, active citizens, other governmental organizations).

A pragmatist approach also reinterprets legitimacy. Legitimacy can be defined as a conversion of power into authority which establishes ‘simultaneously an obligation to obey and a right to rule’ (Schmitter 2001: 3). When a regime is legitimate, ‘the ruled’ voluntarily accept ‘the actions of those that rule’ (Schmitter 2001: 2). This means that ‘members of a democratic association accept the decisions that are made and the outcomes that are produced’ (Eshuis & Edwards 2013: 1068). Max Weber defined legitimacy in terms of the belief in it by social agents (Weber 1922/1968). However, most scholars in policy and planning, following deliberative democracy theory, agree that legitimacy ‘requires more than the consent of the governed’ (Connelly 2011: 932). Democratic legitimacy of both the mini public and the democratic system entails “reflective assent through participation [in authentic deliberation] by all those subjected [to the decision in question]” (Dryzek 2010: 23). When we apply this definition of legitimacy to do-ocracy, it immediately becomes clear what the complexity is: voluntary citizens want to act in order to improve their neighbourhood, are not concerned with the idea that they have or should have authority, nor that it should be accepted by others; they simply want to solve a problem or make their neighbourhood more liveable and even fun to live in.

More and more scholars in policy and planning are no longer preoccupied with the assessment nor development of formal structures (legality), justifiability, or consent through elections as ways to guarantee democratic legitimacy. These three classic elements of democratic legitimacy are no longer considered sufficient, especially not for more network types of governing or experiments with deliberative democracy (Wallington et al. 2008, Parkinson 2003). Legitimacy is not a ‘given’ but rather a construct that has to be maintained and reproduced (Beetham 1991: 105). Therefore scholars in this tradition consider democratic legitimacy as something that is gained in practice. This type of democratic legitimacy needs to be enacted. This ‘turn to practice’ (Schatzki et al. 2001) includes the study of the discursive and – in the case of do-ocracy actionable – processes through which legitimacy is being produced and reproduced (see Connelly 2011, Levelt & Metze 2013). In a pragmatist approach that comes with do-ocracy, one might argue that to be legitimate, but also to enhance the legitimacy of the aggregative system, ‘reflective assent through (reflective) participation by all those

involved in a collective action' is sufficient. When we take this type of pragmatist democratic legitimacy as our starting point, the three criteria that are challenged most severely by do-ocracy are: representation (including inclusiveness), accountability, and equality (freedom).

### *Representation and inclusiveness*

One of the core issues in democratic theory is representation. Electing politicians is the first association one might have with representation. Of course this is closely related to the idea of representative democracy as a procedure: the electorate votes politicians and officials into office (authorization) and they are held to account by their voters, party, and the office into which they are elected (accountability). However, Hannah Pitkin (1967) has famously argued that this formal procedure is just one element of representation. She conceives of representation as an activity: the act of representing. Representation in democracy also means making sure every person is proportionally spoken for and that decision making as such is inclusive (Dryzek 2010: 44).

Formal representation focusses on acting for, based on authorization and accountability (Pitkin 1967: 58), whereas representation may also consist of descriptive (look after) and symbolic (speak for) activities (Pitkin 1967: 116). Descriptive representation refers to looking after the interest of groups which one represents. In Pitkin's words: "(...) descriptive representation, in which a person or thing stands for others 'by being sufficiently like them'" (Pitkin 1967: 80). The third element of the act of representing is symbolic representation: the reciprocal relation between the representative and the people she or he speaks for. A key issue of symbolic representation is that representatives are believed in by the represented:

'(...) the existence of representation is to be measured by the state of mind, the condition of satisfaction or belief, of certain people, be they the represented or the audience. This makes representation a kind of two way correspondence it concerns the agreement prevailing between the ruler and ruled" (Pitkin 1967: 106).

It remains unclear in in Pitkin's description how this reciprocal relation is realized in action: do specific represented groups need to be informed of actions of the people who represent them or is a general feeling of being represented sufficient? (Feringa 2013: 83). If elements of the act of representing are in place Pitkin suggests we can speak of substantial representation (Pitkin 1967: 166). Pitkin's conceptual differentiation into three elements of representation is actually very useful to assess the democratic anchorage of do-ocracy in comparison to representative democracy.

Obviously, formal representation is key to representative democracy, but how important is it to do-ocracy? Many initiatives, both bottom-up and top-down stimulated, require only very little deliberation and negotiation at best and in many cases seem to be rather apolitical. What would be the purpose of voting or appointing citizens into positions representing other citizens in these types of

practices? Perhaps it can have some symbolic meaning because of citizen's associations on how democracy should work. Both participants in initiatives and those not involved may feel represented and included if they know that formal representation is in place.

A small research project on six bottom-up forms of do-ocracy in the city of Leiden in the Netherlands indicates that the less politicised these initiatives are, the lower their need for voting or appointing procedures. This goes both for citizens who are and who aren't involved in these initiatives. Some of the initiatives focussed on protesting government policies. Not surprisingly, these politicised initiatives were the ones that set up a board or made use of established structures such as a board of an owners association in a housing project. However, even in these more formalized groups the authorization of representatives was a pro forma process, indicating it did not make much of a difference to the people involved or possibly affected by these initiatives (Spengler 2011).

Descriptive representation is also an important element of representative democracy. Particularly in national parliaments, municipal councils, regional tiers of government and other elected bodies belonging to government there is a need for the representatives to reflect the characteristics of the people they represent in order to be considered as included. However, extensive research in the Netherlands on members of representative bodies indicates that in terms of educational level they form a poor reflection of Dutch society (Bovens & Wille 2010). This finding also holds for representation in labour unions, environmental and other civil society organizations, and deliberative processes involving citizens in policy formation. Most often we see participants being white higher educated males over fifty (Bovens & Wille 2010, Van Stokkom 2006, Denters et al. 2013). This selection bias in descriptive representation also seems to be in effect in the U.S. (Verba et al. 1995: 163-185) and in the UK (Judge 1999: 21-43). These findings indicate that descriptive representation is very problematic within representative democracy and also at least in some forms of deliberative democracy. Does this also hold for do-ocracy?

When focusing on the characteristics of participants in Dutch bottom-up forms of do-ocracy a wider variety can be seen. Quantitative research in the city of Enschede in the Netherlands on neighbourhood initiatives indicates that people with secondary education participate most and that higher educated people are strongly underrepresented (Bakker et al. 2011: 407). The active participants also have a strong social network in the neighbourhood and seem to have a relatively strong connection with the neighbourhood via house ownership or children. There doesn't seem to be a significant difference between the number of male and female participants (Bakker et al. 2011: 408-410). Qualitative research of Van de Wijdeven (2012) in more than ten cities in the Netherlands seems to confirm these findings. He concludes that the image of the white, highly educated male over fifty doesn't seem to fit the active participants in do-ocracy – he sees a lot of women, and people with lower education as well.

Research by Tonkens and Verhoeven corroborates these findings for the top-down stimulated forms of do-ocracy in the deprived neighbourhoods of Amsterdam. They find that many women

become active (61%), almost half of the participants is under fifty (48%), 40 percent are from a migrant background, 14 percent are educated on the lower and 36 percent on the secondary level. Finally, 32 percent has a low and 58 percent an average income. Other interesting features of the active 'doers' in Amsterdam are the length of their residence and their ties to the neighbourhood. A substantial number lives 10 to 20 years in their neighbourhood (25%) and 33 percent even lives there 20 to 50 years. On a scale from 1 to 10 these active citizens score a 7,4 on satisfaction with the neighbourhood and 8 on feeling at home, indicating a pretty strong connection to their neighbourhood. Finally, most of these doers are fairly active as voters, volunteers, attendants of neighbourhood meetings, and have quite a high density in organizational memberships (43% is member of 1-2 organizations, 36% of 3-4 organizations). This indicates that these do-ocrats possess substantial social capital.

The higher participation of women, migrants and people with secondary or lower education in Amsterdam marks a striking difference with literature on political participation (Burns et al. 2001). Perhaps these groups feel more comfortable with the pragmatist and apolitical nature of do-ocracy, which may also apply to the overwhelmingly secondary educated citizens in the bottom-up forms of do-ocracy described above. Another possible explanation for top-down do-ocracy can be found in the mobilization efforts of civil servants and social professionals who deliberately aim at engaging other citizens besides the participatory elite of neighbourhoods. Sometimes this also involves toning down or circumventing the dominance of these participatory elites in cases where they try to monopolize the available district budgets (Tonkens & Verhoeven 2011: 38). Yet another explanation can be found in the strong neighbourhood ties and robust social capital, both well-known correlates of social participation (Wuthnow 1998, Putnam 2000, Van der Graaf & Duyvendak 2009). This may again also apply to the participants in bottom-up forms of do-ocracy.

Symbolic representation seems to be more important for representative democracy than ever before. Politicians and policy makers need to operate in a political landscape characterized by complex forms of network governance and meanwhile they are heavily scrutinized and commented upon by the media (Hajer 2009, Bevir 2010). Hajer (2009) has argued that authoritative claims making depends on people believing *what* politicians and policy makers say but they also need to be convinced by *how* they say it – by their performance of politics or policy, which is very close to Pitkin's definition of symbolical representation. Also in deliberative democracy we know that the group of activists whose voices are heard loudest in the deliberation often have extreme standpoints that aren't always shared by the majority of the community they seem to represent (Fiorina 1999), which is a more indirect way of analysing believe in what the representatives do by those they represent. This raises the question how important symbolical representation is in do-ocracy?

Again, research by Bakker et al (2011) on bottom-up do-ocracy in the city of Enschede indicates that the issues doers care about don't differ from what the general neighbourhood population wants. Qualitative research by Van de Wijdeven & De Graaf (2014) on do-ocracy in rural areas

suggests the same picture. The ‘outputs’ – activities, projects, public services – of the active group of doers are generally well received. In other words: the doers seem to be fairly good ‘in touch’ with what the community wants. The small research on six initiatives in the city of Leiden shows that symbolic representation matters a great deal to non-active citizens. As long as active doers engage with non-active citizens by showing interest in their concerns, ideas, doubts, and suggestions the non-active citizens feel symbolically represented (Spengler 2011: 50).

In the top-down form of do-ocracy in Amsterdam’s deprived neighbourhoods we find some indirect evidence that symbolic representation matters. Active doers take initiatives which consider social problems such as language deficiencies, isolation, mono-culturalism and nuisance. Also they involve small groups of other citizens: 49 percent of the initiatives involve 0-5 other citizens and 24 percent 5-10 other citizens. In most cases doers develop stronger positive attitudes towards other people in the neighbourhood (69% became [much] more positive), and a minority of doers has encountered citizens who did not want to help with their initiatives (19%) or who were against it (8%) (Tonkens & Verhoeven 2012: 42, 56, 61). However, top-down stimulated do-ocracy is not only a land of milk and honey, citizens also experience tensions amongst each other on how the district budgets are spent. Working with such budgets leads to comparisons: how fruitful are the other initiatives? Why do they cost so much money? Receiving less money can be experienced as a lack of recognition and may lead to jealousy, suspicion of other citizens cheating with their budgets, and fear of being accused as fraudulent by other citizens (Tonkens 2012: 71-73).

Contrary to formal and descriptive forms symbolic representation is hard to define. Many things can make representatives believed in by the represented. In representative democracy it may have to do with what politicians and policy makers say and how they perform what they say. The closest perhaps is the idea of discursive representation (Dryzek 2010: 45). This may also apply to active doers. However, for them it also matters a great deal if they take initiatives that reflect the broader interest of a neighbourhood or a group of people that may be affected by the initiative, or if they engage with non-active citizens to tap their thoughts and suggestions.

### *Accountability*

Accounting is an activity that refers mainly to the bookkeeping function in public administration and that over the years transformed into a broader form of public accountability. Public accountability is simply said “the obligation to explain and justify conduct” (Bovens 2007: 450). Mark Bovens in his overview article distinguishes three steps in accounting. First of all, the actor needs to “inform the forum about his or her conduct, by providing various sorts of data about the performance of tasks, about outcomes or about procedures”. Second, the forum needs to be able to interrogate the actor to verify the adequacy of the information. In other words, the actor needs to be “answerable”. Third, the forum “may pass judgement on the conduct of the actor” (Bovens 2007: 451). In the political interpretation of accountability this means that governmental actors need to provide information, for

example in town councils or in parliament; the forum members can ask questions about the information and agree with or reject it.

When we apply the concept of accountability to do-ocracy, we turn to a more society driven and horizontal form of accountability. Rather than in the political accountability with a forum, an actor, and a formal relation, accountability in do-ocracy comprises of a social relation. It is within the social relations that develop that citizens ‘account’, justify and explain why certain actions should be taken. A first step in this direction was what has been called the ‘dialogue of accountability’ (Thomas & Martin 1996) which recalls Durkheim’s conception of dialogue between governors and governed as the best means of democratic accountability (Ranson 2003: 461). In deliberative theory this notion is further explored and it has been argued that in this talk centric democracy theory “Accountability replaces consent as the conceptual core of legitimacy” (Chambers 2003: 308). Still, in this notion, the relation between governed and governors is vertical. One step further is the notion of accountability as a social and horizontal relation in which actor-to-actor explanations and justifications are given. This notion further develops in a networked society. Is this still part of the public domain? In a do-ocracy in which self-organizing citizens provide public services this is a hybrid form that combines elements of private and social accountability with those of political accountability.

In horizontal and social accountability, storytelling becomes more important. The first step in accounting, as described by Bovens, consists of giving information. In a New public management (NPM) approach this means providing (and meeting) performance indicators, providing numbers on goals set, and rendering account of what activities have been organized to achieve the public goals. Previously this type of accounting was expert based and moved in a direction of performative accountability (Ranson 2003: 463). However, fairly recently giving performance information is also considered “story telling” as a legitimate form of rendering account, in combination with toned down elements of NPM based quantitative accountability (“tellen en vertellen”, Ministerie BZK 2013: 23, Gabriel 2001).

Storytelling is a more informal way of accounting that better suits do-ocracy: “Through storytelling, members [of the burning man event, eds.] shared their experiences and perspectives on what the organization should or should not do. Although stories did not always generate their storytellers’ desired changes, they can reinforce how the organization and its members have mutual responsibilities to each other” (Chen 2013: 904). Storytelling can go hand in hand with practical activities, and in do-ocracy these often coincide. During activities, participants will share all sorts of stories, and in the meantime very casually discuss why they are undertaking specific activities and choose not to conduct others.

Bottom-up doers do render account to the public, although this often isn’t done in a very formal or high profile way. They inform the community throughout the process, through a variety of media: for instance neighbourhood or community websites, or the local newspaper. But the most important way is worth to mouth. The doers are often well tapped into the local social network

(Bakker et al. 2011), and they talk about what they are up to, what they are doing and what the results are (Van de Wijdeven & De Graaf 2014). The enthusiastic reaction, the applause (they hope to get), from the local community is an important energizer for these doers: that is the fuel that keeps their motor running (Van de Wijdeven 2012, Van de Wijdeven & Cornelissen 2007). If what they are doing is not appreciated, they directly get such feedback from their community. That is because, again, they themselves meet the other participants or ‘consumers’ of their initiatives quite often. If the social activities or public services are not wanted: people simply don’t show up.

The same goes for top-down stimulated forms of do-ocracy. However, active doers who benefit from district budgets, such as in the Amsterdam case, also need to render account of how they have spent the budget. They are confronted with the need to keep receipts and will get an accountants declaration in exchange if all money has been spent according to plan. Additionally we see some horizontal story based forms of accountability such as photo’s, first hand stories, reports of events, and occasional on site visits by civil servants and aldermen. Do-ocrats appreciate such forms of horizontal accountability because these connect to their desire for recognition of their efforts in the neighbourhood. However, they also long for quantitative measures to be able to show to other citizens that they spend their public money correctly (Tonkens & Verhoeven 2012: 73).

### *Equality*

At the core of thinking about democracy is the concept of equality. There are strong relations with other grand and contested concepts such as liberty, power and representation. In coming to binding collective decisions the preferences of citizens – or at least those affected by a decision – need to be taken into account. Those can only be taken into account when they are considered equal. Not so long ago, women and blacks were excluded from formal democratic decision making because they were not considered equal. Nowadays, formally this type of inequality is diminished in most western democracies; however, in deliberative forums and others sorts of citizens’ participation some groups still are (tacitly) excluded or self-exclude, for example the knowledge of professionals is often implicitly considered more meaningful (Van Bommel et al. 2010). Hence, equality as a concept raises many discussions about legal and social equality, equality of opportunity, and the notion of difference, and it goes far beyond this paper to address these discussions. Thinking about do-ocracy and a practice turn in democracy theory; we can adapt the idea of “equality of opportunities” (Rawls 1971). This idea that all citizens need to have equal opportunities would mean the opportunity to participate and act in a do-ocracy. Moreover, the outcomes of do-ocracy – especially when self-organizing groups of citizens’ start to provide public services – can be evaluated from an equality point of view.

On a more practical level do-ocracy challenges the concept of equality in three ways: 1) how to make sure that people have equal opportunities to organize themselves and start doing things (access); that they have equal influence on the actions and decisions being made (influence), and that outcomes of collaborative action benefit participants – and perhaps even the general public – equally

(results). A daunting dilemma for all sorts of democracy, including do-ocracy, is how to promote equality of opportunity and at the same time take into account different needs and wants.

A way out might be to separate core public goods from those that can be provided by active citizens in a do-ocracy: governmental organizations provide a first tier of public services that we through aggregative mechanisms agree on, hold accountable, have equal access to and which benefit us all. There is a second tier of public services that goes beyond the first layer and is provided for by doers in do-ocracy. Equality can be abandoned in that second tier and may be replaced by a notion of “reciprocity” which is ‘the capacity to seek fair terms of social cooperation for their own sake’ (Gutmann & Thompson 1996:52). Even when the doers disagree on their course of action, they have to continue ‘to seek fair terms of cooperation among equals’ and as such reciprocity is a middle ground between “prudence” and “impartiality” (Gutmann & Thompson 1996: 53). The notion of reciprocity challenges doers to at least have equal influence on the course of action while they are acting; however, access to do-ocracy, representation and the effects might still be too limited or not sufficient.

Doers do ‘care about the whole’ (Boyte 2004, Van de Wijdeven 2012) and they do care about an equal access to the public services they deliver, or to the activities they organize. But: ‘the whole’ is often to be understood in a more communitarian way: it is the group they identify with or ‘belong to’. For instance ‘the Antilleans’ or ‘single mothers’ in the neighbourhood (Tonkens & Verhoeven 2011). In rural areas the communities often are that small (for instance much smaller than an average city neighbourhood in Amsterdam) that the ‘own group’ and the village community largely overlap. Though when it comes to involving others people in the organization (Oude Vrielink & Van de Wijdeven 2007) of these actions or services (not as the ‘consumers’ or ‘target group’ of their actions) equality isn’t that big an issue. It’s not about equality, but about getting things done. And to get things done you have to keep the project group relatively small (in neighbourhood projects 6 is often the maximum), and you want to work with people that you know you can rely on: friends neighbours, or people you know from earlier projects, but who have (just as the initiators) a doer- profile and in coproduction ‘deliver what they promise’ (Oude Vrielink & Van de Wijdeven 2007).

The problem of equal access to the do-ocracy can be taken care of in the discursive representation, and accounting for people’s abilities and disabilities. However, these mini publics cannot provide public services at the level of the city, let alone the nation state. In an ever more polycentric society this might not be problematic.

## **Conclusions**

There is an inherent tension between aggregative forms such as representative democracy and voluntaristic forms of do-ocracy. If do-ocracy develops strong(er) ties with governmental actors or other institutional players their reflex will be to assess do-ocracy by applying classic democratic norms for evaluation. Interestingly, do-ocracy seems to outperform representative democracy in terms



of descriptive representation and inclusiveness does not seem to be under pressure in do-ocracy. Therefore we have argued that do-ocracy also needs to be evaluated by applying pragmatist criteria. We suggest that pragmatist criteria should always be in place and depending of the type of institutional involvement one may add classical criteria. More concretely, this means thinking about symbolic representation, horizontal story based forms of accountability, and looking at reciprocity instead of equality. This should apply to bottom-up approaches of do-ocracy, whilst top-down approaches may additionally require criteria on descriptive representation and light forms of vertical accountability based on counting.

We want to finish up with some critical remarks on treatment of do-ocracy by politicians and policy-makers. Applying classical criteria to do-ocracy may easily lead to overburdening initiatives by doers with high standards that are often not even met in representative democracy. The energy of these initiatives may be sucked out of them by applying overly pretentious norms. Moreover, the interest of politicians and policy makers in do-ocracy should also be critically evaluated: hailing do-ocracy as the panacea for budgets cuts in times of financial austerity may lead to a bias on those who can organize it themselves, instead of providing basic public goods to those who need. Finally, a strong focus on doing may lead to favouring voluntary activities which are instrumental to government over politicised forms of initiative which focus on influencing policy making or setting the political agenda.

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