

eParticipation for Lurkers and Stand-by Citizens? Evaluating a Norwegian Rapid Feedback eParticipation Solution

14th International Conference on the Digital Society
November 21st – November 25th 2020



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About myself

Professor in Information Systems

Research on electronic participation since 2003

Smart cities research group

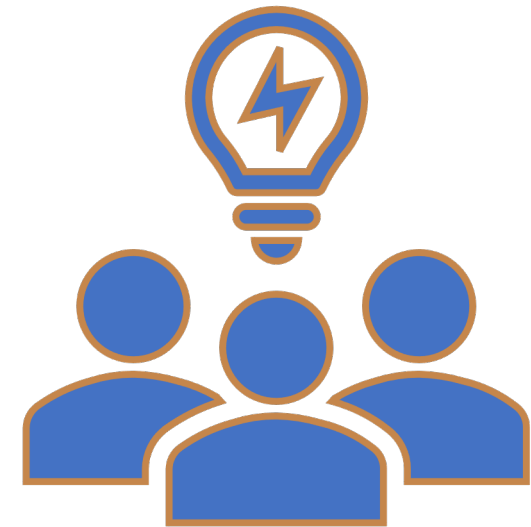
Teaching IoT, business analytics

IARIA Fellow



Introduction

- ❖ Many experiments with complex and advanced solutions to engage citizens.
 - ❖ Time-consuming and struggling to attract participants.
- ❖ Social media has a low threshold for participation.
 - ❖ Quality of information is low, and many citizens avoid social media due to unhealthy debate climate.
- ❖ The need for a middle ground.
 - ❖ Effective participation with visible impact.



Social Media

Many citizens avoid discussing politics in social media.

Debate climate is often harsh and dominated by «trolls».

Discussions often ends up with attacks on persons and not discussing issues in a peaceful way.

The need for an alternative solution.

Stealth Democracy

Book by J. R. Hibbing and E. Theiss-Morse (2002)¹.

Citizens are not necessarily eager to participate. They have voted for politicians to handle politics and are more concerned that the government provide good services to its citizens.

Citizens want to be heard but are not necessarily interested in spending time to read up on and understand complex issues.

A good approach to participation is to ask simple questions about issues where citizens can form an opinion without reading hundreds of pages of documentation.

1) J. R. Hibbing and E. Theiss-Morse. "*Stealth Democracy- Americans' beliefs about how government should work*". Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Lightweight Democracy

How do we create this middle ground between complex e-democracy solutions that few are motivated to use, and social media where “trolls” rule the political debate?

The idea of **lightweight democracy** was first presented in conference paper¹ and a book chapter from 2016².

In January 2018 we were approached by two entrepreneurs aiming to enhance local democracy. They established the start-up company Post Local.

They had the same ideas, and our collaboration resulted in the pilot project we are presenting here.

- 1) M. R. Johannessen, L. Berntzen, “Smart Cities Through Implicit Participation: Using Gamification to Generate Citizen Input for Public Transport Planning,” H. J. Scholl et al.,(eds.) *Electronic Government and Electronic Participation*, 2016.
- 2) Berntzen, L., & Johannessen, M. R. (2016). The Role of Citizen Participation in Municipal Smart City Projects: Lessons Learned from Norway. In J. R. Gil-Garcia, T. A. Pardo, & T. Nam (Eds.), *Smarter as the New Urban Agenda: A Comprehensive View of the 21st Century City*. Switzerland: Springer.

Pilot Project

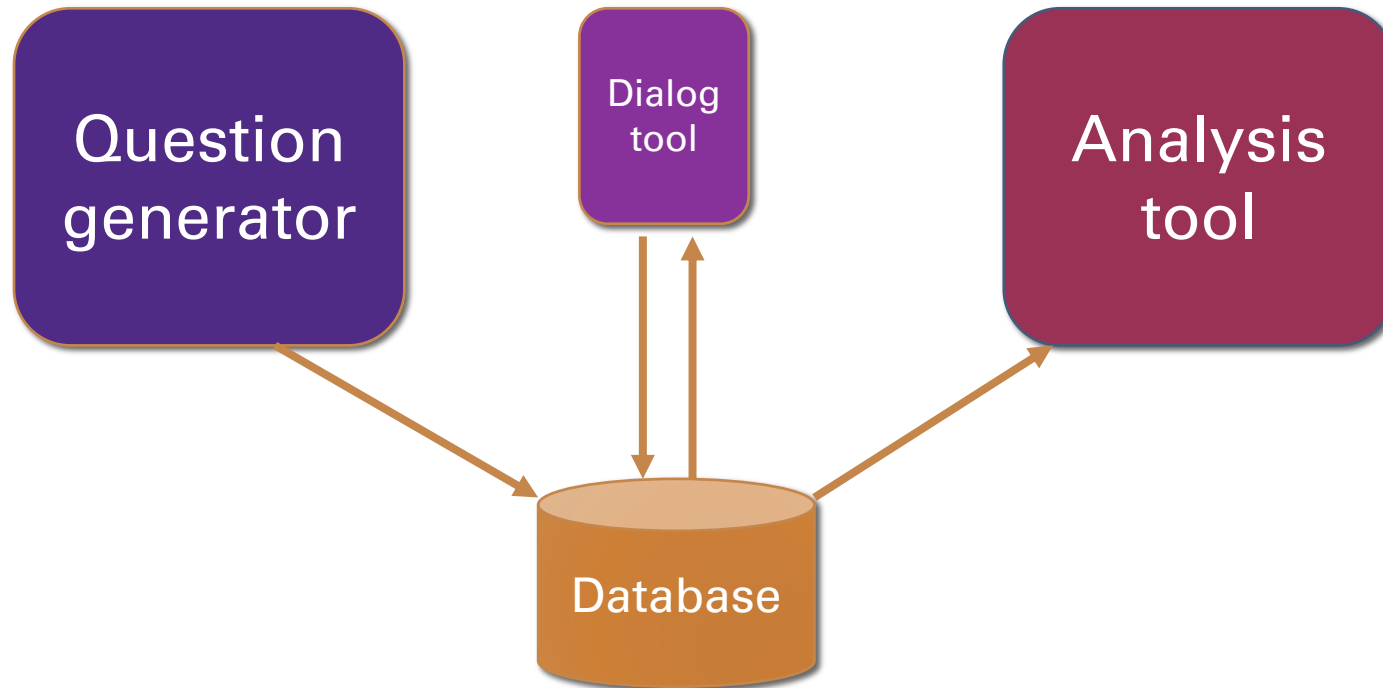
Funding from the OsloFjord regional research fund.

Aim: Develop an app where the mayor of the can consult with citizens on current issues.

(In practice, a group decides on what questions to ask, not the mayor).

The lightweight vision: Users should only spend two-three minutes to answer questions, so easy to use that it can be done in the checkout queue at the supermarket.

System Architecture



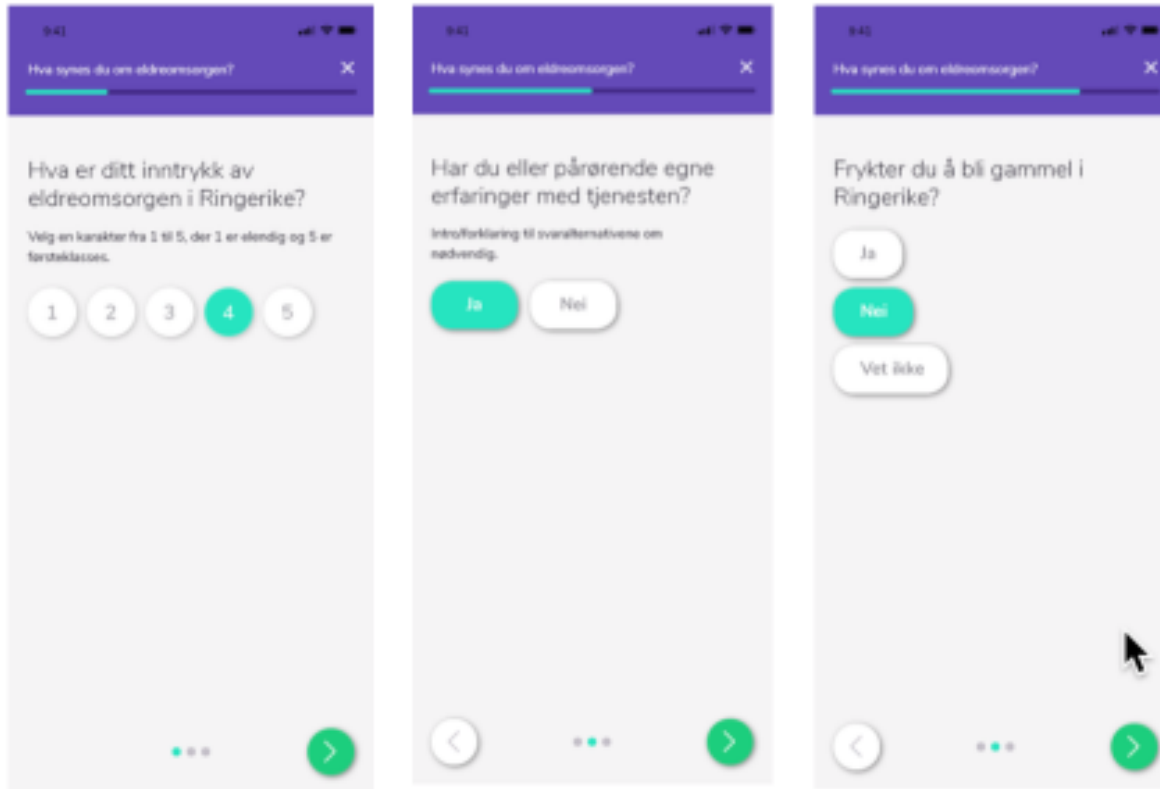
The dialog tool app runs on a smartphone: Android or IOS.

App Screen Shots



Left: Startup screen
Middle: Select municipality (first time app is used)
Right: A greeting from the mayor

App Screen Shots



What is your impression of elder care in Ringerike?

Do you or your next in kin have own experience with the service?

Do you fear growing old in Ringerike?

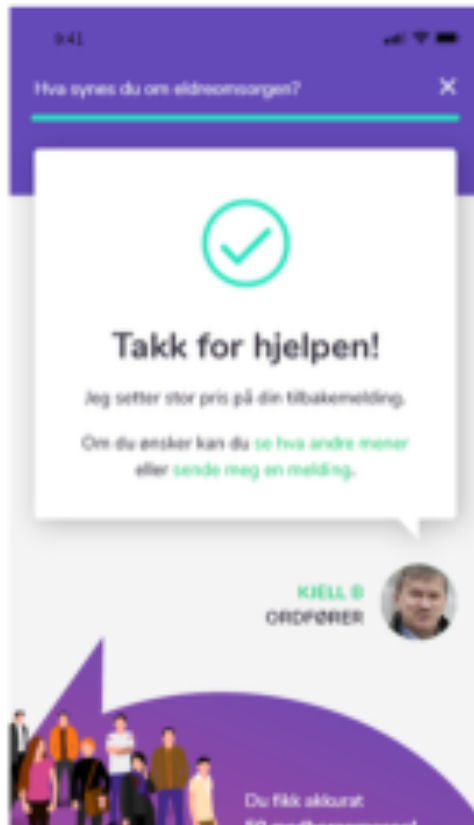
The survey is set up by using the question generator.

Left: Question with answer from a scale (1-5)

Middle: Question Yes/no question

Right: Yes/no/do not know

App Screen Shots



Left: The mayor says “Thank you for your help”
Right: Instant feedback – how did other users respond?

Data Collection

Workshops with politicians (12 mayors, more than 50 politicians)

Alpha-testers (lean startup, minimum viable product)

Beta-testers from five municipalities (approx. 250)

Survey of beta-testers (183)

Qualitative Data from Workshops

Agreement that municipalities have a potential for better communication with their citizens, especially regarding younger citizens.

Concerns about ownership of data and privacy.

Should everyone be included or use a representative group of citizens?

What questions can be asked?

Who will develop the questions (e.g. executive council)?

Qualitative Data from Workshops

The project is only partly about technology.

The most important issue is how to use the app to achieve the objective of better communication.

Therefore, most of the work has been targeting procedures, and proper training of the politicians.

It should be used to get input on everyday issues, not ideology.

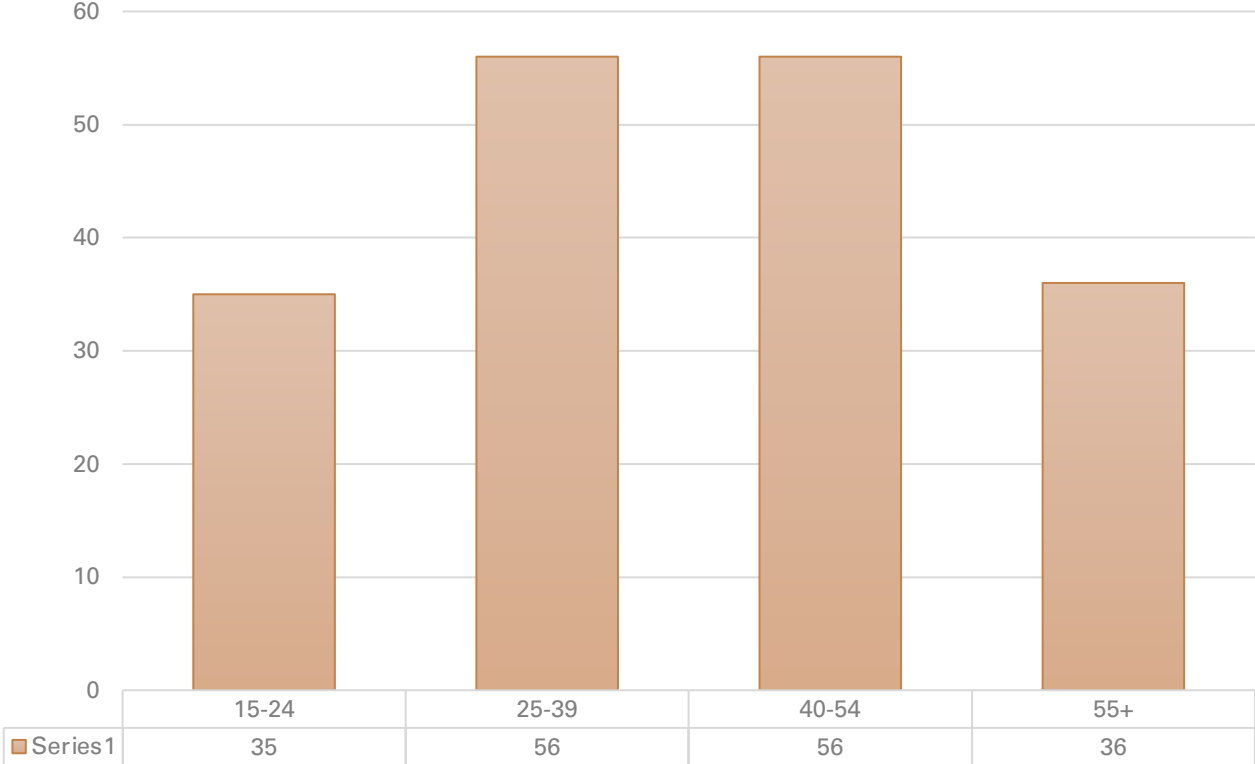
Lots of positive feedback from mayors and politicians.

Survey – Feedback from Citizen Test Users

Distributed to 250 test users.

Received 183 responses.

Gender and Age



Education Level

Education level	%
Primary school	18,6
Secondary school	16,5
Vocational school	8,5
University (undergraduate)	27,1
University (graduate)	29,3

Education level of respondents was above national average

Gamification

We wanted to know how gamification would motivate the users, e.g., some kind of rewards or getting levelled up.

Gamification motivates use?

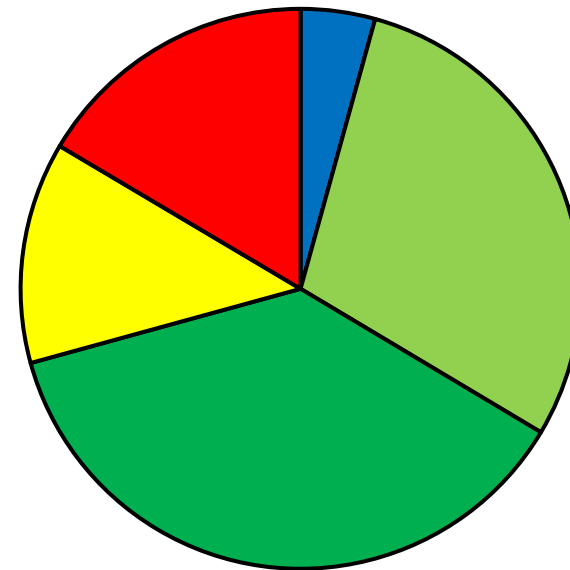
Blue: Totally agree

Light green: Partly agree

Dark green: Neutral

Yellow: Partly disagree

Red: Totally disagree



■ Helt enig ■ Delvis enig ■ Nøytral ■ Delvis uenig ■ Helt uenig

Gamification

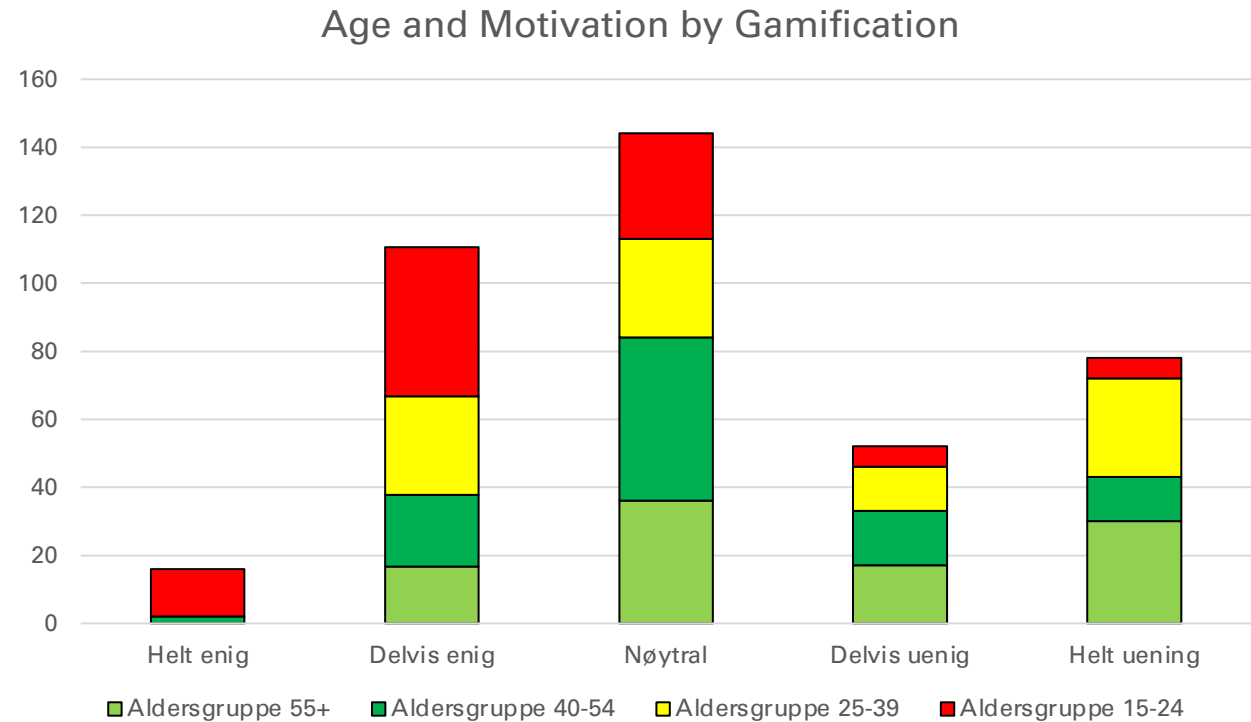
Scale is:

- Left: Totally agree
- Right: Totally disagree

Broken down into age groups:

- Red: 15-24
- Yellow: 25-39
- Dark green: 40-54
- Light green: 55+

Gamification may have impact on some users



Political Activity

Been member of or liked a group or page discussing politics (35,5)

Been member of, or liked politician or party in social media (25,5)

Signed a petition/campaign (25,5)

Been in contact with a politician by phone, e-mail or personal meeting (25,0)

Commented on a political entry in social media (23,9)

Participated in a people's meeting (19,7)

Been member of a political party (18,6)

Been in contact with a politician or party through social media (16,0)

Written an opinion in the newspaper (13,3)

Expressed opinion in a people's meeting (12,2)

Used the comment function in electronic newspapers (12,2)

Participated in public demonstration (8,0)

Written political blog entry (2,0)

The Mayor on the Greeting Page

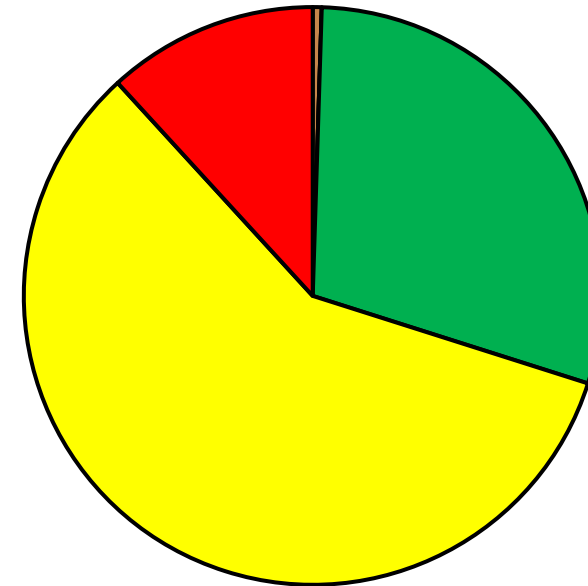
The first thing the citizen sees is a picture by the mayor and a request to provide feedback.

Green = neither/nor

Yellow = positive

Red = very positive

Mayor on the Greeting Page



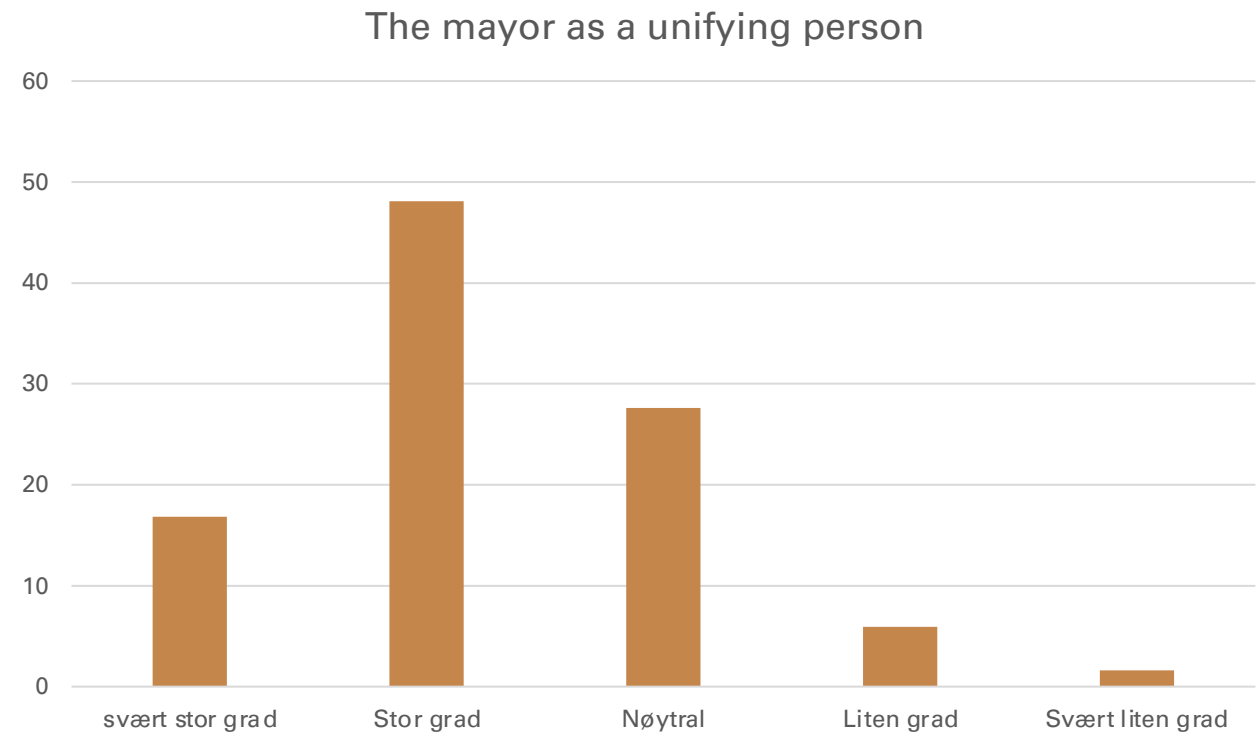
■ Svært negativt ■ Negativt ■ Hverken eller ■ Positivt ■ Svært positivt

The Mayor as a Unifying Person

We wanted to know if the mayor is regarded as a unifying person (a mayor for all citizens).

Scale:

- Left: Very large extent
- Right: Very small extent



Expectations

We asked the respondents of their expectations:

I expect my input to have direct impact on the municipal policy-making (6,5)

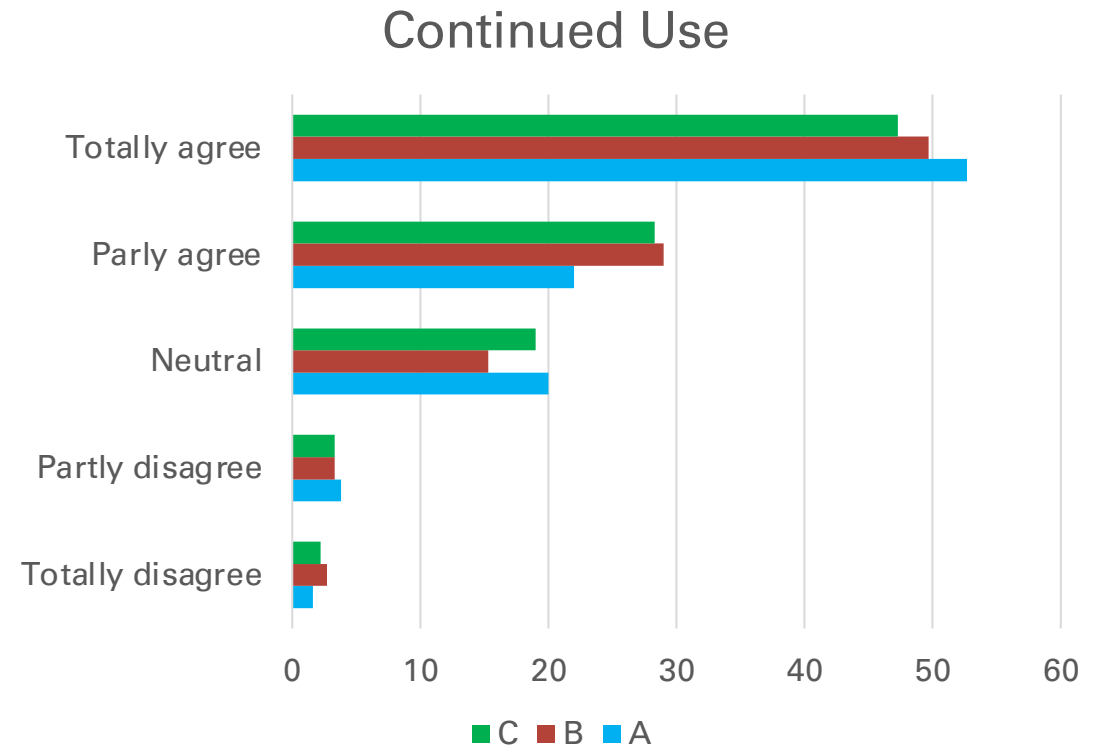
I expect to be listened to, and that my opinion is taken into account when discussing relevant issues (64,1)

I have my say, but am not expecting that it is used (22,2)

No expectations (7,1)

Continued Use

- A. If the app gets available for everyone, I will continue to use it
- B. I will probably use the app if it is available after the testing period
- C. It is more likely that I will say my opinion to the municipality through the app



Continued Use

The previous slide shows reasonably good agreement on the answers from the three questions.

Just over 70% answer "completely agree" or "partially agree" on whether they will continue to use the app if it becomes available, while about 25% are neutral.

Thus, only 5% partially or totally disagree that they will continue to use the app to provide input to the municipality.

The results are promising, giving hope for success if the solution is operated properly in each municipality.

Conclusion and Future Work

The solution has been further developed, and will be launched next spring.

Several municipalities have now signed contracts with the company.

Based on the pilot, we have secured funding from the Norwegian Research Council to collaborate with other researchers on an in-depth.

Thank you for watching

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