Technology in the election process

Who governs?
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While many elections are conducted across the world to very high standards, it is an enormous logistical task.

It is no surprise that there is variation in the quality of electoral management board delivery.
Electoral Management Bodies

- EMBs necessary to guarantee trust in the process
- Trust important for all parties to accept the outcome of elections
What do we know about EMBs

- What works?
  - Use of performance monitoring (James, 2013)
  - Funding (Clark 2014, James 2014)
  - New challenges (James, 2014, Loeber 2017)

- Limited data on EMBS:
  - International IDEA classifications
  - Surveys of electoral officials in the UK and USA, but no cross-national comparisons.
Technology in the Election process

- Not just e-voting but many more possibilities
- From software to register candidates and voters to voting computers and internet voting
- Use of technology has advantages for the election process
- Requires a re-thinking of choices that were made with regard to the process
- Not enough to just replace paper with technology
IT projects and government

- Often lack of IT skills within government
- Cannot compete with salaries offered in private sector
- Thus reliance on private IT providers
- Outsourcing can lead to uneven relationship
Use of private companies

- Not necessarily bad
- However, risk is that private companies dictate what is possible
- Reliance can also lead to less knowledge in government
- Example: Dutch case
- What are the interests of the private company in the outcome of the elections?
Ownership of technology

- If government buys the technology: danger of lock-in with rapidly old-fashion technology (think Microsoft upgrades)
- Ownership in hands private company leads to problems with proprietary protections (source code)
- Who has enough knowledge to check correctness
- EMBs often very small bodies, lack of knowledge?
Research question

What are the effects of the use of technology in the election process for the independence of EMBs?
The surveys

- A structural survey of **one senior official** in each EMB:
  - The organisational design of the EMB
  - The volume of staff
  - The tasks and responsibilities of the EMB
  - The decision making process within the EMB
  - The budget and resources of the EMB
  - The EMBs involvement with the international community
  - Use of ICT in the electoral process

- An online survey of **all personnel**, to identify:
  - Role within the EMB
  - Perceptions of the quality of elections in their own country
  - Perceptions of the human resource practices and their workplace
  - Training and professional development
  - Demographic information
Data

- EMS survey: all Council of Europe countries
- Collected between July 2016 and September 2017
- Structural survey contains questions on technology used, role of EMB in decision-making process, ownership and providence of technical support on Election Day
Preliminary findings

- All countries that responded use a form of technology with exception of Belarus, Slovakia and Sweden: E-enabled elections have become the norm.
- However only 9 countries use devices that are traditionally labelled as e-voting: voting machines, internet voting or devices for electronic counting.
- Means that public might be unaware of most of the use of technology.
## Role of EMB in decision-making process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decisive</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No involvement</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15 EMBs decisive role, 9 countries national legislature, 5 countries national executive and 3 countries another body. No countries leave this to the local government.
## Ownership of technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EMB</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>61,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body of central government</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body of local government</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private company</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14,7</td>
</tr>
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## Technical support on Election Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical support</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EMB staff</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees central government</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees local government</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees private company</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preliminary conclusions

- Use of technology in elections is now rule and not exception
- Raises questions on consequences for independence of EMBs that so far have been understudied
- Results show large dependency on private companies both in terms of ownership and technical support
- Question who governs elections when technology is used
Next steps

- Add data from other parts of the world, ELECT survey and recent additions to EMS survey (approximately 50 more countries so far)
- Further analysis of the data
- Data will be made available to other researchers
- [www.electoralmanagement.com](http://www.electoralmanagement.com)