

## WT45 – The participation of citizens in the life and choices of society

### Session 1

#### The Chinese vision

- Internet use by authorities to know their policies
- Citizen participation through internet
- For the government, e-participation mean to solve conflicts
- a lot of debates to discuss social issues
- citizens are waiting for more participation
- Chinese economy is no more longer a planified one
- direct elections of villagers countries
- Development and increasing role of NGO
- Economic growth can't solve social problems,
- More freedom of expression
- National assembly with its representatives is another mean of participation
- Increasing role of research centers and media
- challenges : large and very mobile population, large country
- Challenge : electoral laws are not clear and not always respected
- Challenge : laws are not adapted with quick social and economic evolutions
- Challenge : citizens can't express precise propositions to solve problems

- Challenge : enlargement of direct elections to districts, collectivities
- Challenge : the increase in age of rural population
- Challenge : strong tensions due to scandals and conflicts of interests between local administration and villagers comitees
- Challenges : - low rate of internet users , - low participation rate in elections in cities, - Chinese customs

## **The European questions addressed to Chinese**

- Q: is the government answer to public debate? A: the government answers to citizens but not in a public way so a lot of people don't know them
- confusion between participation and democracy?
- control of internet by the state?
- Q: are women allowed to vote? A: women can vote but there is no parity in representation
- Q: what kind of channels can be used by citizens to communicate with the government? A: citizen can express directly toward the representatives, the representatives can collect citizens opinions
- Q: what is the profile, the background of people working in NGO? A: people in international and local NGO are highly educative and well paid, in governmental associations the people are civil servant, they are not trained for this work
- Q: what kind of public policies tend to promote the use of internet? A: the government wants to promote web sites
- Q: what kind of conflict occurs during rural elections? A: problems concerning land use and taxes inequalities

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### Session 2

#### The European vision

- Situations : cities network on use of NTIC to reinforce citizen participation and local development. - citizen participation in regional policies. - representative democratie doesn't succeed into taking account citizen expression. - in Europe : subsidiarity principle. - multi concept of e-participation. - public meetings and workshops on regional level with random of citizen. - horizontal line (citizens) and vertical one (political power). - Mayor elected directly by citizens. - charte with very clear engagements for all the participants. - participatory process are necessary concerning debates on technological risks. -project between several cities to find the needs of the cities and the use of NTIC by the citizens. - PD used to analyse measures in rural areas touched by rural exod. - develop expériméntations on urban planification from the beginning to the end of the process. - participation tradition (consultations) but since the 90's try new forms of NTIC. -very active local communities
- How NTIC can improve communication between cities authorities and citizens?
- Need of legal framework, legislation
- How to take account of needs of all the people, including those who don't participate in the process
- take into account of citizens actions which don't fit in the traditional framework of PD
- Also censorship on internet in Europe
- Create new ways of participation to mix individual and collective (NGO, trade-unions) requests
- Evaluation of PD procedures is necessary (time, money)
- To mix the public (different profils of citizens)
- Challenges : - cities representatives aren't used to work in this new context (to deal with a large amount of opinions). - e-debate can be manipulated. - to mix traditionnal ways of doing DP and new ones. - to share power with citizens by implementing DP. - Religious divisions. - participation costs a lot of money. - how to reach all the people ?. - to mix representative and participative methods to legitimate decisions

## The Chinese questions addressed to Europeans

- Q: is the PD in Europe is mature ? A: the participation can kill participation if citizens are too often consulted
- Q: e-communication is OK for young, educated and not poor people? A: publics are different : youngs don't vote but their are very active in internet discussions, migrants who are not allowed to vote
- Q: do exist methods to evaluate the performance of DP ? A: It is very complex : lot of variables, long-term impacts of DP. In some countries, observatories were created to observe if decisions of PD are respected
- Q: are internet users use pseudo ? Does exist a procedure to assure anonymat on internet? A: Encourage people to use their real name on internet to avoid abuses
- Q: are there measures to manage interactions between municipalities and citizens? A: Municipalities try to reduce the differences and the gap of use of NTIC (computers in public place, education)
- Q: who wants to keep young people in rural area in eastern Germany : people or the government ? A: both
- Q: how to implicate those who don't vote ? A: PD can be a way to reintegrate people far away from RD
- Q: is assessment finances by the state or a research project ? A: both
- Q: Authorities can't answer to all the questions asked by internet ? A: no too many questions and some technical problems

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### Session 3

#### Similarities

- Citizens are waiting for more participation
- Similar problems: rural areas, social system...
- Idea that economic growth can solve social problems is less and less believed
- Digital, economic and educational gaps; need to develop empowerment
- e-participation as a means to manage conflicts for authorities
- Positive attitude to increase democracy
- Control and censorship but with different forms
- Personalisation of power and politics
- Government must encourage participation
- Representative Democracy is fundamental
- e-participation excludes parts of the population
- Challenge for both : how local authorities can reduce inequalities in e-participation
- Increase citizens participation

## Differences

- Citizens are waiting for participation for different reasons: lack of Representative Democracy in Europe, desire for democracy in China
- Legal situation in Europe more defined
- Democratic situation
- Lot of representative institutions in Europe, not yet in China
- In Europe, we must encourage people to participate; in China, people ask to participate
- More compliance, passiveness in Europe
- Role of NGO (Europe services suppliers)
- Chinese government encourages Participative Democracy; in Europe not very motivated because already Representative Democracy
- China, people are used to obeying, culture of democracy must be developed
- Participative Democracy in China still top down process
- In china, some people think that democracy isn't appropriate for the country
- Democracy integrated in European culture, in china it is imported
- In Europe Participative Democracy complements Representative Democracy, in China, the boundary is less clear
- Different conceptions of Participative Democracy in China
- Important historical and cultural differences between China and Europe

## WT45 – The participation of citizens in the life and choices of society Session 4

### How to enhance the dialogue between China and Europe ?

- Continue to work together on several questions: role of NGO, e-participation, non participation, conceptions of democracy, citizenship education
- Suggestion for a smaller and more interactive dialogue, with small groups working on long term and on very precise subjects
- Assessment of the results of the Forum for a better resources allocation
- Develop Small scales projects on a long period
- Develop electronic dialogue between Chinese and European
- Chinese would like to work with Europeans on NGOs role and development: in China, lack of budget, lack of qualified people
- Develop small working group on e-democracy
- Work on relation between participatory democracy and representative one
- To work on informal relations between persons interested by the same issue
- To develop a website to bring formalised contributions and to continue the dialogue and sharing experiences