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A roadmap approach to e-democracy

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Author:

Thomas Rössler, Secure Information Technology Center Austria

Introduction

E-democracy is one of the most challenging topics of today's discussions on democracy and electronic governance. Applying the roadmap method to planning, implementing and monitoring e-democracy and e-democracy methods at all levels can ease and improve these processes. The roadmap method, as proposed below, can be used as a pragmatic planning method to inspire and guide further e-democracy initiatives. It does not imply a monolithic plan for the introduction of e-democracy. Roadmaps are practical and adaptable tools and provide examples how the future of e-democracy could benefit from their use. The method – as successfully used by the European Union to encourage the use of e-identity technology in its member states – can also be applied on a smaller scale, for example to plan and monitor a particular e-democracy project.

The use of roadmaps could be particularly useful, for example:

- In the formulation of an e-democracy strategy tailored to a particular country or region.
- In the organisation and planning for the development of a comprehensive e-democracy toolkit or project.

The Purpose of the Roadmap and its Requirements

A roadmap for e-democracy should benefit the stakeholders by providing planning advice and guidelines for the improvement of e-democracy tools and systems. Furthermore, this guidance will be based on examples of good practice and the CoE's common principles on e-democracy.

To clarify, a roadmap should allow stakeholders to :

1. Gauge their own development status.
2. Identify the next steps necessary for their further development.
3. Work towards a definite endpoint, that is, a vision of fully functioning e-democracy.

Whilst the roadmap provides building blocks, it is not an inflexible blueprint of technological requirements or change in democratic processes.

A roadmap can be created by:

- 1. Establishing a common terminology-** Clear definition of terms is vital to all discussion.

2. **Defining/adapting a common topology of democracy-** In addition to a common terminology, a common view on the existing/aimed topology of democracy will further improve the common understanding.
3. **Collecting examples of good practice-** These examples are essential to the creation of the roadmap's 'building blocks'.
4. **Defining the building blocks of the roadmap-** The nature and specificity of the building blocks, as concrete objectives/processes or theoretical prerequisites, must be very carefully considered.
5. **Signposting the main stages of development along the roadmap-** In order to help stakeholders to identify their own position on the roadmap, measure their progress, and plan their onward journey, qualitative indicators should be established at the main junctures. It is recognized however, that finding an appropriate way to measure progress along the roadmap so schematically may be difficult.
6. **Establishing a clear timeline-** This should be challenging but realistic, based on progression through well-defined and targeted stages.

Roadmaps are becoming the tool of choice for e-governance initiatives in Europe. It may be difficult to prepare a well constructed roadmap but once established, not only should it help foster and maintain momentum, but also help to create a common understanding and vision amongst all stakeholders, for the future of e-democracy.

Drawing the map: building blocks in perspective.

There are two approaches to creating a roadmap: top down and bottom up. The former works backwards from the final goal to the first step, extrapolating the building blocks from the imagined end. The latter, whilst also possessing a clear set of ultimate aims, works towards them by gradually building up a plan from a well-defined starting point. This more pragmatic approach will be taken by the following schema. The methodological divide described here refers only to the creation of the roadmap, not the actual implementation of e-democracy.

The following roadmap schema is created according to a series of building blocks leading from a basic level of e-democracy preparation, to a common goal. For the sake of simplicity, the roadmap and its building blocks can be organised in a linear fashion, though the more complex, ambitious or abstract the final goal, the more additional branches of activity may be required. (However, parallelism is possible. In order to

consider parallel building blocks, the schema has to be logically extended following the proposed methodology recursively).

Each building block is a milestone, that is, it represents a certain set of requirements that must have been met by that stage of the roadmap. These building blocks are arranged in logical progression but they are by no means isolated. There are two different types of relationship between the building blocks:

1. **Defining requirements-** Each building block, in representing a stage of development, influences the requirements of the following block/stage.
2. **Reviewing achievements-** The corollary of the above is that as each milestone is reached the achievement must be reviewed according to the requirements laid out by the previous building block. This is very important for measuring and assessing progress along the roadmap.

Figure 1 illustrates a basic linear roadmap structure and the relations between the building blocks.

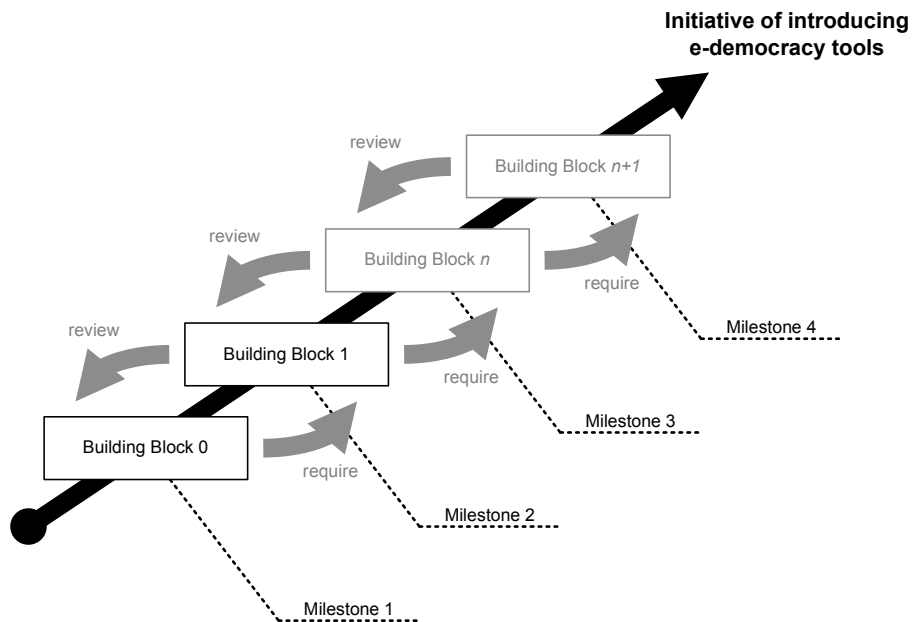


Figure 1: Schema of creating a roadmap and the relations between building-blocks; building-blocks are examples.

Figure 2 shows a more complex roadmap structure that takes parallel activities/requirements into account. The magnification of one building block reveals that its internal structure is also organised as a 'mini-roadmap'. The recursiveness of this design schema is one of its strengths.

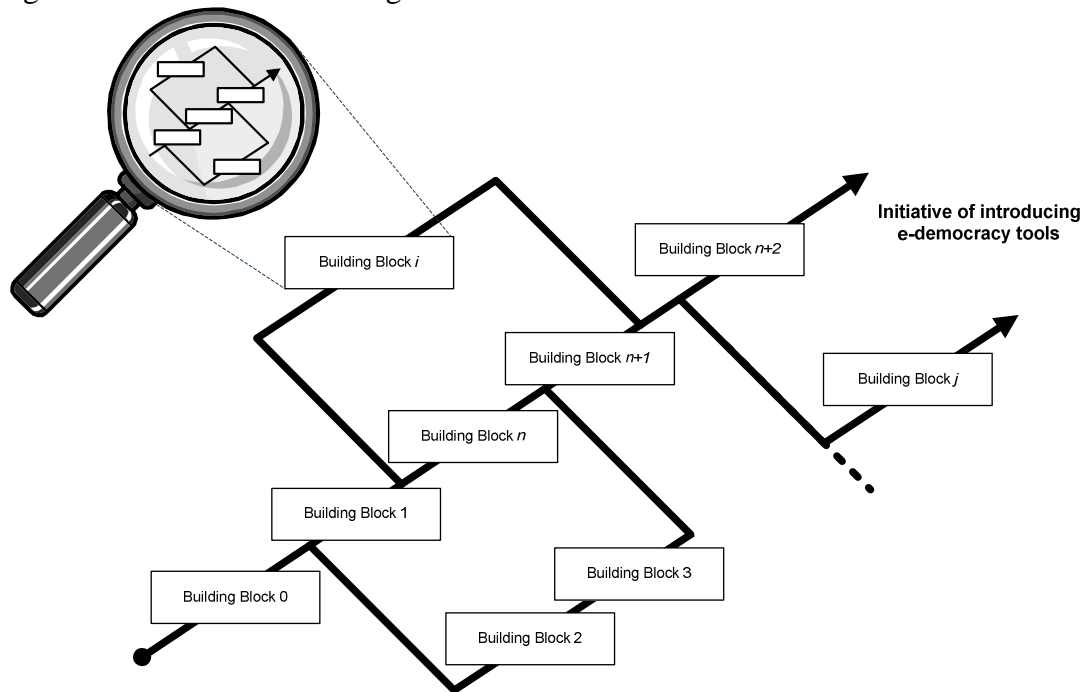


Figure 2: Example of a complex roadmap schema containing parallel building blocks.

1.1.

A concrete roadmap example

The following is an example of how a roadmap might be used for the introduction of e-democracy tools in a region or country. This example does not explicitly deal with activities that should be taken beforehand, e.g. establishing a political motivation, evaluation of forms of participation, etc., nor does it concentrate on a concrete target scenario, but deals with the introduction of an abstract e-Democracy tool.

The starting point of any e-democracy project must be a wide-ranging discussion that not only clarifies motives and goals but reviews the practical task ahead. From this example then, three clear building blocks can be extracted:

1. 'General Considerations',
2. 'Practical Considerations',
3. 'Establish/ prepare the environment' (for the project).

Although by no means complete, the above roughly demonstrates how a proposition can be broken down into manageable building blocks and arranged into a logical sequence. Of course, actions, intentions and the substance of these blocks will vary according to situation. They must be altered accordingly; step 3 deals with this issue as the

particularities and shortcomings of the relevant environment (region, country) must be addressed in order to ensure its receptiveness to the proposed e-democracy tools to be introduced in the later stages. This is very important: the building blocks that follow these preliminary stages and the actions they describe, will be conditioned and even defined by the particular situation they refer to. Therefore, we cannot elaborate on this example and outline the content of later building blocks.

Generally however, we can conclude that each building block will be defined by the following elements:

- **Name of Building-Block**
Each building-block must have its own name.
- **Requirements**
Each building block has a set of requirements, in part defined by the preceding block, which must be fulfilled if the stage can be said to be reached.
- **Intention**
This is the descriptive element which summarizes the intentions and intended outcome of the above requirements.
- **Activities**
This element provides a list of activities necessary to fulfilling the aims of the building block.
- **Review Criteria**
Control questions address all relevant aspects of the building-block and help to verify progress and achievement of the building block's requirements.
- **Remarks**
Any further descriptive remarks about the building block.

Building-Block	
1) General Considerations	
Requirements	<p>This is the very first building block; thus there are no dependencies with results of preceding building-blocks.</p> <p>Nevertheless, a political motivation or better an agreement on introducing participative processes/e-democratic tools is required.</p>
Intention	<p>Discuss general aspects and formulate the motivation for introducing e-Democracy tools and services. Furthermore, it is necessary to acquire the present democratic behavior considering different aspects, whereas legal and social aspects are of utmost importance.</p> <p>This building block should provide a profound understanding and diagnostics of the current situation with respect to democratic and participative processes and movements.</p>
Activities	<p>The following list is an informative enumeration of possible actions (it does not claim to be complete):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflect political motivation • determine the existing/planned concept of governance/citizenship • ascertain and describe existing participative processes • determine the influence capability of existing participative processes • determine and describe participative processes which are enabled by law but are not yet in place; describe the expected influence • analyse actors, levels and methods of negotiation and decision making, democratic deficits, power relations and lobbyism • analyse the general political culture, related policy fields and additional ways of democratic policy making • ascertain and identify the (official) political commitment (define expectations and discuss benefits, pros and cons for various levels)
Review-Criteria	<p>The following questions should be answered (this list does not claim to be complete):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the aim of participative processes and how to deal with its results? • Is the aimed participative process a bottom up or top down process? • Do you want to meet the increasing demands of public

	<p>accountability in general?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which concept of governance / citizenship do you want to follow? • Are aim and consequences (i.e. duties and responsibilities) of each concept clear and transparent for all (the informed citizen, the involved, collaborative or empowered citizen)? • What are the traditional ways of negotiation, participation and decision making? What about political culture as an important factor of influence? • Who is entitled to define a problem which causes the need for a participative process and why? • Is there an official political commitment for introducing e-Democracy services/tools—not only at the level of governance setting off the process, but also on the related levels? Is it possible to guarantee a commitment independently from election periods? • Does the political commitment include all identified democratic/participative processes or only some of them?
Remarks	<p>The outcome of the investigative activities requested in this building block should provide a basis for a better understanding of existing/possible democratic and participative processes. Furthermore, the democratic culture of society should be acquired.</p>

<p>Building-Block</p> <p>2) Practical Considerations</p>	
Requirements	<p>This building block succeeds building block 1 “General Considerations”. Therefore, the following requirements must be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There must exist a complete description (diagnostics) of existing and enabled democratic/participative processes. • A sufficient official political commitment for elaborating on e-Democracy services/tools is required. As the introduction of e-Democracy is a long-term movement, a sustainable commitment is necessary.
Intention	<p>Based on the result of the prior considerations of building-block 1, this building-block aims to analyse the identified (conventional) democratic and participative processes in detail. It should be determined which of them can and should be converted to electronic or electronic aided processes. Furthermore, the identified processes and their semantic requirements should be well described.</p> <p>This building-block should bear the basis for environment related activities targeted in the succeeding building-block. Thus this</p>

	building-block should result in a semantic definition of requirements and in a set of (semi-)formal process descriptions.
Activities	<p>The following list is an informative enumeration of possible actions (it does not claim to be complete):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • determine the added value of an online (electronic) participation process in contrast or supplementary to an offline procedure in this individual case • identify processes which should not be provided in an electronic form and describe why (due to legal, political or organizational reasons) • describe the identified democratic/participative processes in a (semi-)formal way (preferably by using a standardized methodology) • determine and describe precisely the semantic requirements for all processes considered being convertible to an electronic equivalent • identify those processes which should be provided in an electronic/online form; create a list of priority if possible
Review-Criteria	<p>The following questions should be answered (this list does not claim to be complete):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the added value of an online participation process in contrast or supplementary to an offline procedure in this individual case? • Which democratic/participative processes should be realized as an electronic/online service or tool? • Do you expect an overall advantage—in comparison to the expected costs/drawbacks—of introducing the identified online processes? If possible, provide a quantitative comparison. • Are all identified processes qualified for being implemented as electronic/online tools/services? • Are all identified processes well described? Are the descriptions complete and exhaustive? • Are the semantic requirements of the identified processes complete and compliant with the legal background (identified in building-block 1)?
Remarks	Usually, e-Democracy services and tools will be introduced stepwise following a phase plan (i.e. master plan). It is recommended to make a phase plan based on the outcome of this building-block and to take a decision regarding concrete e-Democracy (sub-)projects.

	After this building-block, concrete e-Democracy tools might be chosen.
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Building-Block	
3) Establish Environment	
Requirements	<p>This building-block succeeds building block 2 “Practical Considerations”. Therefore, a number of democratic/participative processes which are intended to be implemented as electronic/online services/tools are identified already. For each of them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a (semi-)formal description, preferably following a standardised methodology exists • a complete description of all semantic requirements exists
Intention	<p>This building-block aims to analyse the environment for creating online/electronic democratic and participative services/tools as identified and described in the preceding building-blocks.</p> <p>This building-block deals with the legal, non-technical and technical environment. If the existing environment lacks of essential elements, this building block should bear concrete suggestions and measurements.</p>
Activities	<p>The following list is an informative enumeration of possible actions (it does not claim to be complete):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflect the semantic requirements identified in building-block 2 against the given legal background; if necessary, formulate recommendations to adapt the existing legal situation according to the defined requirements • reflect the semantic requirements identified in building-block 2 against the given non-technical background (e.g. organizational situation); if necessary, formulate recommendations to adapt the existing situation according to the defined requirements • reflect the semantic requirements identified in building block 2 against the given technical background (e.g. existing IT-infrastructure); if necessary, formulate recommendations to adopt the existing situation according to the defined requirements • if necessary, create a plan containing concrete measurements in order to prepare a complete environment as required • analyse the resources needed to take part (e.g. money, time, skills, etc.) • analyse citizens’ technical environment (e.g. Internet coverage, etc.) and evaluate the danger of digital divide

<p>Review-Criteria</p>	<p>The following questions should be answered (this list does not claim to be complete):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the targeted democratic/participative processes require modifications of the current legal situation? • Is there a political commitment (majority) to enforce the proposed legal modifications? • Are organizational changes required, e.g. is there a need to introduce further authorities or bodies (e.g. national registers, etc.)? • If organizational changes are required, do they imply legal provisions (i.e. legal modifications) as well? • Are the formulated legal and organizational modifications consistent? • Is an exhaustive IT-infrastructure already in place (e.g. provided by national/regional/local e-Government initiatives)? • Are special technical infrastructure components required in order to create the targeted democratic/participative services/tools and which of them exist already (e.g. electronic identity management infrastructure, electronic delivery channels, etc.)? • Do you know the status of skills, the access to resources for participation of those who should/want to participate? • How many citizens are equipped with or have access to the requested infrastructural elements (e.g. Internet, electronic identities, etc.)?
<p>Remarks</p>	<p>This building-block ensures that the environment suits the requirements of the targeted democratic/participative processes. This building-block might result in the conclusion that some requirements postulated during the preceding building-block cannot be fulfilled. If this is the case, the result of the preceding building-block should be reviewed and revised.</p>