

Offentlighedens nye grænseflader

Appendix - The index constructions

In the analyses throughout this book, 10 indexes were constructed and used for analyses. In the following we sketch the idea and the construction of the indexes.

Indexes addressing experience of citizenship

A large number of questions throughout the survey were intended to catch latent dimensions of attitudes among the respondents. A classical way to explore latent values and attitudes is through manifest statements, where respondents can declare a certain level of agreement or disagreement, the so-called Likert-scales. Ideally, the latent dimension, for instance social capital, is investigated through questions which can be aggregated into a formative index. In order to be sure the variables fit together on one dimension, the Alpha value of such indexes should be at least 0.5, ideally 0.7 or higher. The indexes below are based on initial theoretical expectations but are tested through exploratory factor analysis as well as reliability analysis. There were almost perfect correspondence between initial expectations and the factors revealed through the factor analysis, the only exception was that sense of belonging ought to be divided into geographical and institutional belonging respectively (see below). Altogether five such indexes were constructed:

Efficacy: this index is supposed to measure the respondents' subjective political competence, often called "efficacy". The index is based upon answers to question 70-74 in the survey: "I follow politics", "I feel connected to a political ideology or certain political ideas", "I can influence politics on certain areas which interest me", "ordinary people can share their opinion through media" and "Denmark has a well-working public sector". The index has an Alpha value of 0.64.

Social capital (trust): this index is intended to measure respondents' trust in society and other people, what Robert Putnam (1999) has called "social capital". It is based upon answers to questions 75-79: "You can generally trust in other people", "I feel safe where I am in everyday life", "In the end everybody has to take care of oneself", "I am afraid of getting ill or having a bad health" and "I often feel lonely". Where questions are negative framed, the values were reversed, so high values always reflect high level of social capital. The Alpha value is 0.49. The relatively low Alpha value is probably due to the ambiguity of several of the questions, not at least the question on illness and bad health. However, tests showed that the value could not be raised through omitting certain questions from the index.

Political consumption: This index addresses political consumption, a greyzone between classical politics and consumption. Respondents attitudes were explored through questions 92-96: "It is important for me to buy organic food", "I am aware of what I eat", "I am worried about chemistry in food", "As a consumer I can influence the producers", "I might boycott products from certain countries". There was a high coherence among the answers to these questions as the Alpha value is 0.67.

Sense of belonging: this index is intended to correspond somehow to the concept of public connection, the respondents' sense of belonging to society and other people. It was measured through questions 80-84: "To what extent do you feel belonging to": "my local area", "Danish society", "Europe" "My workplace, school etc.", "My colleagues, fellow students etc." A sixth category, "belonging to a fan group or a fan culture" (question 85) was included in the survey, but first, few respondents declared belonging to a fan culture, secondly factor analysis demonstrated

that this issue had no or very low coherence with other forms of belonging (and other dimensions of citizenship and participation at all). The Alpha value of this index is 0,59. Further, the factor analysis demonstrated that one should distinguish among geographical and institutional belonging. Thus, two further indexes were constructed.

Geographical belonging: is based upon the questions 80-82 from above. Alpha is 0,56.

Institutional belonging: is based on question 83-84 from above. Alpha is 0,63.

Indexes addressing the performance of citizenship through various activities:

In order to summarize the respondents performance of citizenship through specific political and cultural activities, four additive indexes were constructed: political activity (online and offline) and cultural activity (online and offline). Alpha values make no sense for additive indexes.

Index of political participation offline was based on question 68 from the survey and basically counts the number of the following political activities in which the respondent had participated within the last year: membership of a political party, attending political meetings, contacted a politician or civil servant, participated in town meetings etc., written letters to the editor, discussed politics with friends or colleagues, followed political debates on TV, joined a petition and “others”.

Index of online political participation was based on question 69 and measures the number of the following online activities in which respondents had partaken the last year: participated in online debates (in chat rooms, blogs, social network sites etc.), joined online petitions, contacted a politician or civil servant electronically, searched for information on parties and candidates, tested political opinions in tests or quizzes online, watched politicians’ videos online, read politicians’ blogs, joined online referendums, read politically related content on MySpace, Facebook, YouTube etc.

The index of cultural activity offline was based on the first eight items of question 97 measuring the number of the following activities in which respondents had engaged the last year: visited a historical museum, visited an art museum, participated in a sports event, visited a library, attended a theatre performance or a classical concert, attended a rhythmic concert, been at the cinema and visited a festival, market or a fair.

The index of online cultural activity was based on the last four items of question 97 counting the number of the following activities within the last year: Participated in online groups on literature, images or music, used websites related to literature, art, music or history, visited a Danish museum website and visited a foreign museum website. Further, the activity of looking at net art, taken from question 27 was included.

Indexes addressing ICT competences and use

In order to discuss and analyse the impact of ICT use and competence on a number of factors, it was obvious to aggregate some measures of these factors, summarizing several survey questions. Three indexes were constructed: “ICT competence”, “net consumption” and “net production”.

ICT competence is a formative index based on question 44 to 49, addressing the respondents’ evaluations of their own ability to perform a range of operations online, from the very simple like checking e-mail to the more complicated of setting up a website or a mail list. The Alpha value of 0,71 demonstrates a coherent dimension of ICT competence.

Net consumption is an additive index based upon question 27, measuring the aggregate number of different forms of internet use related to information seeking and other non-social activities online in which the respondents have taken part the last year.

Net production is based upon the aggregate number of more socially active (Web 2.0) activities the last year, like participating in social network sites, building websites, updating blogs and uploading or sharing videos and images.

Attitudes to online social networks

As social media, especially online social networks was an independent focus of this book, it was natural to summarize respondents' attitudes to the phenomenon:

Attitudes to online social networks in a formative index, based on question 51-57: "I might use it for finding a partner", "I joined out of curiosity but got "hooked"", "It brings me closer to friends, relatives, family", "The Internet is one thing, my other social life another", "It reminds me of the town square, everything is public", "I reflect on privacy and about who is reading and watching my profile", "I do not use it much anymore". Again, the index was based on Likert-scales and negative questions reversed, so high values always signal positive attitudes to use of online social networks.

Final remarks on the indexes

In order to make the most meaningful analyses, all indexes were standardised; the possible scores range between 0 and 10.

For the additive indexes, one might object that it is a simple way of measuring just to count the number of certain activities performed by respondents. One should maybe look at the intensity or the frequency of activities. However, we will claim that altogether the additive indexes draw a picture of the activity level of respondents in various respects and through comparison with other variables they contribute to a broader picture of citizen roles.