

Evolutions in Citizen participation? The consequences of a shift in the associational life on the profile of active members.

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Since Putnam published his book 'Bowling Alone' in which he foretells the decline of social capital, a strong discussion sparked between 'believers' and 'non-believers'. However, there seems to be a growing consensus on the thesis that a *shift* is taking place in the nature of citizen participation rather than a decline. More and more evidence is gathered suggesting an overall stability in the numbers of participants, while at the same time showing a transformation of the nature of associational participation. People don't participate less but they participate in different ways.

Former research based on Flemish evidence, has led to the conclusion that the chances for people from different socio-economic and socio-demographic groups to be an active member of an organization are not equal for different organizational types. Some types of organizations seem to attract people from all socio-economic and socio-demographic groups, while others seem to attract more specific ones.

In this paper we will further explore the consequences of a shift in the associational life on the profile of active members. We address three questions. First we examine the shift in the associational life. We will explore if we see a changing pattern in numbers of participation over different organizational types over time. Secondly, we will examine if the socio-economic and socio-demographic profile of participants does change during the time-period considered. Thirdly, we will explore the link between both evolutions. We will make use of the 'Survey Sociale en Culturele verschuivingen in Vlaanderen' (Survey on social and cultural transitions in Flanders).