

of underlying concepts. Based on this input and the advice of substantive and methodological experts, items or scales are then adopted, re-designed or discarded.

The work on the rotating modules is carried out jointly by the selected team of academics in collaboration with a subset of the CCT. To some extent during earlier rounds of the project and as far as possible during the latest Round 3, attempts have been made to better document the process. But further work is needed to improve the structure of and accessibility to this documentation.

Data users are already provided with thorough documentation of the ESS methodology and questionnaire design needs to meet these same high standards. During Round 4 we intend to improve such documentation by asking the Question Design Teams and CCT to document process via a pre-designed template. The template and guidelines will be included in the paper and suggestions for improvements discussed. The paper will consider the balance between the burden of demands on the design team and the utility of the documentation for translators and data users. The ability to use this style of documentation for other surveys will also be discussed in the context of improving comparability of questionnaire design in a cross-national context.

Dealing with Divergent Demands: Questionnaire Construction Between Longitudinal and Comparative Constraints

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In 2002 a new Local Government Act was introduced in The Netherlands. Initiators of this new Act expected attitudinal and behavioural change of municipal councillors. To determine if these expectations come out, a pre-measurement and post-measurement are needed. In 1999 a pre-measurement was conducted, a post-measurement will be conducted in the spring of 2007. With respect to this post-measurement several aspects need to be thought over, a.o. data collection, research population, research sample and the questionnaire. Especially the questionnaire construction faces various difficulties, resulting from divergent demands imposed by longitudinal versus internationally comparative comparability. To start it is a longitudinal research: the questionnaire should be comparable to the 1999 questionnaire. Secondly, the Dutch research is imbedded in an international council survey conducted in 15 European countries (Municipal Assemblies in European Local Government in Transition: MAELG project). Each participating country has one or more national coordinators that will conduct the survey. The coordinators/experts have been working together on the development of the survey design, the questionnaire and strict guidelines on issues such as sampling and response rates. The aim is to achieve the highest standards of cross-national research. Both objectives – longitudinal and internationally comparative comparability – ask for several requirements, sometimes coinciding, sometimes conflicting. This paper sets forth a number of questionnaire formulation problems stemming from divergent demands, and argues the solutions we have chosen during the preparation on the council survey. The problems and solutions are embedded in a more general framework of identical/equivalent indicators (Van Deth (ed.) 1998; Przeworski and Teune 1966/1970).

Comparative Questionnaire Design: a Review of Current Practice

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Design of questionnaires for comparative research generally involves the following four decisions:

1. whether to adopt existing questions, adapt existing questions, write new questions, or develop a questionnaire that is a mix of adopted, adapted, and new questions;
2. whether to ask the same questions (ASQ), ask different questions (ADQ), or develop a questionnaire that is a mix of the same and different questions;