Chapter 15
The Process of E-Government Public Policy Inclusion in the Governmental Agenda:
A Framework for Assessment and Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The incorporation of information systems in government agencies is a process that started several decades ago, but it has sped up its pace due to the evolution of information technology and communications. This process could be characterized as being responsive to specific or by-sector requirements without policies or guiding principles. To this date, national and local government agencies obtain, record and process information in order to accomplish their duties. Their ways illustrate a fragmented scheme, noticeably based on the criteria of a self-referenced, bureaucratic state. Accordingly, the state has a myriad of information systems which are frequently disconnected. In spite of this, their remarkable evolution is a valuable asset that policy makers should consider. When the concept of electronic government emerged in the late nineties, it came to bridge the gap in the creation of public policies regarding the use of state information technologies and communications. However, electronic government it is not just limited to technology applications; it also introduces an innovative view on state modernization. The latter is presented from an external point of view that adopts the citizen's perspective and emphasizes the need for coordination and integration in inter-agency processes. The development of electronic government has two basic approaches: electronic government initiatives and electronic government policies. The first approach resembles the traditional incorporation of information systems in government agencies,

where multiple electronic government initiatives respond to specific vertical requirements. The second alternative incorporates a holistic view intended to build a global model of State through an electronic government public policy. This chapter focuses on the political process leading to the development of an electronic government policy, and it is illustrated by the analysis of the political process that led to the development of electronic government policy in Uruguay. The analysis uses John W. Kingdon's (1995) multiple streams model, a conceptual approach that is intended to explain the mainstreaming of policies in the governmental agenda. The chapter further proposes that the multiple streams model could be extremely useful as a framework to be used on an ex ante basis for advocates of electronic government policy making.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on Electronic Government as a form of public policy and its development as a political process. It proposes an analytical framework that allows for assessment of advocates of Electronic Government during primary stages of this process. Bearing this roadmap in mind, the journey starts with the shaping of the distinction between Electronic Government *initiatives* and *policies*.

Electronic Government initiatives are projects whose deployment are either subject to by-sector requirements, or intended to solve a particular problem of the Public Administration. Depending on their own nature they can be classified as applications in the fields of government to citizen (G2C), government to business (G2B), government to employee (G2E) or government to government (G2G). In contrast, *Electronic Government policies* are intended to build a global model of State, introducing integrated contents and providing a new level of cooperation among government agencies, supported by a networking infrastructure. The resulting benefits can be measured in the increased efficiency and improved quality of public services, thus increasing transparency and improving government communication with citizens and businesses (Valenti et al., 2003).

Having stated the public policy aspect of Electronic Government, let us review the chapters´ structure. The first section discusses the importance of mapping out the policy context, so as to carry out an effective policy assessment. It provides support to conceptual policy making acting as a non-linear dynamic process, which involves multiple actor networks with varied interests and resources, sometimes influenced by competing policy standpoints. It introduces the multiple streams conceptual model developed by John W. Kingdon (1995) as an analytical framework, with the intention of explaining the flow of the policymaking process in context. Over time, this flow determines the chances of success or failure of a certain policy initiative.

The second section draws on the political process that led to the development of Electronic Government policy in Uruguay, using the conceptual framework introduced in the first section. This has the merit of being a practical application of the framework and configuring an interesting case study that allows for the critical analysis of the success of the ongoing Uruguayan Electronic Government policy.

Extensive literature exists regarding the implementation phases of Electronic Government (Araya, 2004; Reilly, 2004; PRYME, 2006; Stamoulis et al., 2001; Sware & Deane, 2003). Hence, this chapter attempts to reflect upon previous phases that are mostly related to the setting of the agenda, the specification of alternatives and the decision-making processes.

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