

Government as a Service in Communities

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INTRODUCTION

The autonomous communities enjoy a degree of autonomy by being self funded and operating according to their local rules. At the political level, the autonomous communities still operate in countries such as Spain (Suksi, 2011). The most popular administrative and historical form of the autonomous community is the city state. City states (Held, 1992) are autonomous administrative entities that act as independent countries without being part of a larger country. A city state usually consists of a large city and a surrounding area of small villages that belong to the city state. The city states were glorified especially in the ancient Greece between 550 and 750 B.C. (Rhodes, 2007) when Athens and Sparta became the most powerful city states of Greece (Beck, 2013). Nowadays, there are several modern city states such as Monaco, Singapore, Vatican and Honk Kong (Parker, 2004).

The city states are usually governed by independent governments that have their own army and a unique way of delivering governance to the citizens. The interaction between the citizens and the government depends on the degree of political freedom that exists in the communities. The political freedom is measured by the political rights and the civil liberties (Manion, 2004). Civil liberties and law and order are the influential factors for the development of the e-government systems (Moon, 2005). In this case, the scope of the current work is the exploration of the community's e-government system. The application of the electronic governance in the autonomous community, regardless of its size

and structure derives from the fact that Government is an electronic service.

Government as a Service is a terminology that describes a governance model where cloud computing (Ostermann, 2002) is a serious element in the operation of the public sector. Modern society promotes the service oriented concepts as the fundamental principles for the future of the global economy. One very promising concept being implemented is the Software as a Service (SaaS). While SaaS is enjoying big success, the Service on Demand (Mathieson, 2010) business approach applies to several sectors as well. The platform that is being used for its implementation is cloud computing. Cloud computing as a shared-service computing approach allows the users to outsource the required application, platform and infrastructure to an external source provider.

The world of the political science recently welcomed Government as a Service. This is a concept that mainly targets the internal public of the public sector, the public servants. The servants gain access to several public documents without using any resources of a personal computer, everything is on the cloud. The main idea is that the access to the public documents is done by using any device from any place and any time. The cloud provides the staff with the sufficient resources such as computer memory, special software so as to access and work on the database that stores the public documents.

Despite the fact that Government as a Service is an innovative way to approach governance in the modern times, people are really conservative in the way they

treat GaaS. Most people tend to focus only on the access and storage of public documents via cloud computing. On the contrary, governance in the virtual servers of cloud computing is a type of software and an analysis of SaaS principles will reveal new ways that GaaS could be applied.

BACKGROUND

The choice of the software for the public services is a very important decision that has to take into account several influential factors (Tatnall, 2004). The management of the public funds is a crucial factor for the choice of the software because the government is obliged to use the appropriate software in a cost which will give back profits to the society by estimating the potential return on investment. Therefore, the fact that the government is a big consumer will help the Information Technology sector. In this case it is recommended to give priority in local software vendors so as to help the local economy. Moreover, regarding the software that will be used for the interaction between the government and the citizens it should not be a proprietary but a free one. This action will enhance the political freedom of the citizens by allowing them to interact with the government by choosing a unique way according to their needs. Due to the fact that our goal is to explore the information technology sufficiency of an autonomous community, the next step for the research is to explore the main characteristics of the Software as a Service:

1. **Configuration and customization:** The software user is able to change the parameters of the software according to his/her specific needs. This option includes parameters that mainly affect the GUI of the software rather than its functionality (Yanwen, 2011).
2. **Ease of service delivery:** The central control nature of the software makes the updates and upgrades of the system more efficient as there are no middleware human and/or technical factors. The multi-tenant architecture supports the reuse of generic components, minimizing cost and maximizing the possibility for developing new

releases of the software. A change in a class will be immediately visible to the different instances which use that class. Moreover, the SaaS instance, can monitor a user's behavior and could provide tips for a more efficient use of the software or automatically adjust the software's options to its preferences.

3. **Community functionality:** The influence of Web 2.0 in SaaS is strong. There is a community functionality that allows the sharing of information among the software's users during the stages of a common project. Each user is able to view the available information comment (Levene, 2010).

All the above SaaS characteristics affect and shape a new GaaS model. The following represents an ideal implementation of these characteristics to the Government as a Service concept:

1. **Configuration and customization in Government as a Service:** The user of the service is able to customize and organize his library of public documents according to his preferences. For instance a user is able to change the background of the library by uploading a different picture. Also, if the public servant accesses the documents through a smart phone, then he could adjust the GUI to the needs of the mobile device that he uses. Moreover, if the public documents have to be translated into another language as well, then the user could use a customized version of the software that is stored in the cloud.
2. **Ease of service delivery in Government as a Service:** The central control character provides real time stream distribution of new documents. As mentioned the system monitors a user's choice and shapes his/her profile. If the system's intelligence senses that the user seems to work on documents in a specific database record such as specific citizen, it could act predictably and suggest related records from another database. Every time that a new document from a specific citizen reaches the database, a customized text message could be sent to the servant's cell phone.

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