Chapter 12
Sociopolitical Digital Interactions' Maturity:
Analyzing the Brazilian States

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ABSTRACT

In the context of the "network society" structured on "digital communication" processes, new values and technologies induce changes in government-society relations. The aim of this study was to propose a conceptual framework of understanding the levels of sociopolitical digital interactions' maturity (SDIM) in response to the following question: how can the sociopolitical digital interactions' maturity levels be classified? To conduct this study, a qualitative methodological approach was adopted. The content analysis of the 27 Brazilian state government websites was structured on a conceptual scheme (SDIM), which allowed the verification and classification of digital interactive tools used in e-government portals. It was concluded that the levels of electronic interactivity do not represent institutional democratic development and that co-creation may generate continuous processes of public sector innovation.

INTRODUCTION

In the "network society," (p. 3) which is structured on "digital communication" (p. 3) processes (Castells & Cardoso, 2006), core concepts of the Web, such as informational space and global,

collaborative, and interconnected dynamics (Berners-Lee, Fischetti & Dertouzos, 2000), became inherent to networks and induced changes in the institutional settings of states. This involved the development of new organizational models based on the orchestration of complex, open, and self-

organizing systems. Such models are also based on the co-creation of results through partnerships with civil society (Mulgan, 2006).

The increasing use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in governmental processes tends to guide policy and institutional innovations. Designs of sociopolitical interface compatible with collaborative, contributory, and community patterns (Andersen, 2007) imply the remodeling of informational, legal, institutional, and technological structures of the state based on concepts related to Web 2.0, culminating in Government 2.0 (Chun, Shulman, Sandoval & Hovy, 2010).

Initiatives such as the Open Government Directive (U.S. Government, 2009), the British Government's Big Society Program (Cameron, 2010), the Presidential Innovation Fellows (PIF) (U.S. Government, 2012), and Singapore's eGov2015 Masterplan (Singapore Government, 2013) are based on processes of democratic participation, transparency, connection, collaboration, and co-production of public policies and values (Harrison et al. 2012).

The focus on digital channels of sociopolitical interaction encourages research on electronic tools and intersections between the interests and influences of various actors, from which conflicting and collaborative processes related to the public policy cycle are designed.

The goal of this research is to address the gap presented by Bonsón; Torres; Royo and Flores (2012) regarding the importance of analysis of government actions in the digital environment. Furthermore, this reiterates the gap pointed out by Cegarra-Navarro, Pachón & Cegarra (2012) in our understanding of ICT's impact on government-citizen relations.

The immediate objective of this work was to propose a useful conceptual framework (SDIM) both for theoretical reflections on the theme and for the analysis and design of electronic tools for government websites. Through the SDIM, the

contents of Brazil's 27 state government websites were analyzed.

The central questions in this study were as follows:

1. How can the sociopolitical digital interactions' maturity levels be classified; and
2. What is the current developmental stage of digital sociopolitical interactions in Brazilian states' governmental websites?

The relevance of this research resides in the following: the possibility of using the SDIM framework for analyses of governmental websites; its ability to guide the process of design and improvement of digital tools for participative architecture; for the promotion of sociopolitical interactions through the web; and the possibility of promoting discussions and exchanges between researchers and government agents.

This article is structured as follows: after outlining the literature review, the theoretical setting, and presenting the conceptual scheme of SDIM, the methodological approach is defined. The 27 Brazilian states' government websites are then analyzed and final thoughts are offered on the points discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Web 2.0

The term "Web 2.0" dates back to 2004 and was coined by Dale Dougherty, then vice-president of O'Reilly Media, Inc. (Andersen, 2007). Web 2.0 is also known as "the wisdom Web, people-centric Web, participative Web, and read/write Web" (Murugesan, 2007, p. 34), which refers to further exploitation of the Web through a more interactive and collaborative dynamic.

The authors Chang and Kannan (2008) define Web 2.0 as "a networked world that supports individual users creating content individually and

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