

Chapter 8

Smart Government and the Maturity Levels of Sociopolitical Digital Interactions: Analysing Temporal Changes in Brazilian E–Government Portals

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ABSTRACT

The emerging concept of smart government has a deep connection with the capacity to equalize high levels of performance and responsiveness in order to promote and enable development and prosperity. The expansion of public space towards the digital environment and increasing contextual complexity push governments to new perspectives concerning political and administrative dimensions. The capacity to interact virtually with citizens leads to the concept of sociopolitical digital interactions and the exploration of a conceptual framework called sociopolitical digital interactions' maturity (SDIM) directed the conducting of this study through a qualitative methodological approach. A comparative content analysis of the 27 Brazilian states' government websites was structured on 2013 and 2018 verifications. In this lapse time, the poor adoption of crowdsourcing digital tools denoted low governmental capacity to explore collective intelligence as well as an unwillingness concerning the adoption of citizen-centric models and a lack of openness to co-creative interaction processes.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-6204-7.ch008

INTRODUCTION

In order to deal with the increasing complexity of today's context, some governments are developing new mindsets and to some extent reshaping administrative and political dimensions.

Far beyond the digitalisation of public administration processes and the adoption of innovative practices for the conducting of public policies, the capacity to orchestrate complex, open and self-organising systems is consolidated as a core competency required to promote and enable development and prosperity.

The increasing adoption of information and communication technologies (ICTs), as well as of SMACT (Social Media, Mobile, Analytics, Cloud and the Internet of Things) technologies, pushes governments to learn how to extract advantage from these tools in order to generate actionable intelligence and increase their performance and response levels.

The growing movement by governments towards a citizen-centred model (Citizen-Centric-Government), which refers to the conducting of priorities and services based on the needs of society, is inducing governments to rethink and reshape their political interactions with citizens and could provide a broad range of benefits (Arunachalam & Sarkar, 2013; Clark & Guzman, 2016), leading to the concept of sociopolitical interactions.

Following this perspective, collaboration and co-creation have the potential to improve democracy and public management processes; to empower people in the defense of public interests; and to foster democratic engagement through the promotion of civic culture, education, social participation and politicisation of society.

According to Janowski, Pardo and Davies (2012, p. S1), governments can no longer afford to address increasingly complex and interdependent public goals alone or step back and rely on the markets. Instead, they have to work through networks of state and non-state actors to organize existing resources, knowledge and capabilities in the pursuit of public goals. This reiterates Bertot, Jaeger, Munson and Glaisyer (2010, p. 5), who observed the need to rethink traditional boundaries between individuals, the public, communities, and levels of government concerning how the public and government interact, develop solutions, and deliver services.

Governmental ability to interact with society and other non-state actors consists of a very important skill, which guides the processes of identification of problems/gaps, of perception of the desired/needed outcomes/results and, most important, of collaborative and co-creative processes that lead to the concepts of social capital and collective intelligence. Although an increasing number of governmental agencies are implementing practices of citizen sourcing (Bronk & Smith, 2010) and other co-creative practices, there has been a gap between the reality and the conceptions of the potential of democratic participation.

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