Chapter 26
Smart City Portals for Public Service Delivery:
Insights From a Comparative Study

Christoph Peters
University of St. Gallen, Switzerland & University of Kassel, Germany

Axel Korthaus
Swinburne University of Technology, Australia

Thomas Kohlborn
Sanofi, Australia

ABSTRACT

The future cities of our societies need to integrate their citizens into a value-co-creation process in order to transform to smart cities with an increased quality of life for their citizens. Therefore, administrations need to radically improve the delivery of public services, providing them citizen- and user-centric. In this context, online portals represent a cost effective front-end to deliver services and engage customers and new organizational approaches as back-ends which decouple the service interface from the departmental structures emerged. The research presented in this book chapter makes two main contributions: Firstly, the findings of a usability study comparing the online presences of the Queensland Government, the UK Government and the South Australian Government are reported and discussed. Secondly, the findings are reflected in regard to a broader "Transformational Government" approach and current smart city research and developments. Service bundling and modularization are suggested as innovative solutions to further improve online service delivery.

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation changes the ways we communicate and how we navigate through our cities (Peters et al. 2016). Our todays and our future cities thereby can be regarded as service systems comprise constellations of resources (Kleinschmidt et al. 2016b) that needs to be designed properly in order to co-create the best results for the end customer (Kleinschmidt et al. 2016a), i.e. the citizen of our future cities.

In this context, governments are under continual pressure to improve the delivery of public services in an adequate citizen-friendly manner. Instead of focusing on a specific set of services for targeted customer segments, as is common for organisations in the private sector, the public sector has to deal with a large, heterogeneous portfolio of different services to be offered to all citizens (Wang, Bretschneider, & Gant, 2005). Although different groups of citizens will have different characteristics and demands, accessibility to government services and information has to be ensured (Gouscos, Laskaridis, Lioulias, Mentzas, & Georgiadis, 2002), while at the same time cost efficiency and effectiveness of the service delivery need to be maintained or achieved.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been introduced to offer an increasing number of services electronically, in order to provide the citizens with an online access channel and to decrease the cost of service delivery. These activities can be subsumed under the term e-government, which aims to "…enable and improve the efficiency with which government services and information are provided to citizens, employees, businesses and government agencies…" (Carter & Belanger, 2004, p. 5 f.). With regard to communication channels for delivery of government services, the online channel has probably become the priority for governments, particularly due to its cost efficiency (Ebbers, Pieterson, & Noordman, 2008). Thus, governments have an inherent interest in the adoption of the online service delivery channel by their citizens. Consequently, content and structure of government portals need to focus on those varying needs and aim at the "customers'" (= citizens', residents' and businesses') satisfaction (Kubicek & Hagen, 2000). In light of these requirements, governments have to decide on a specific online service delivery model, which includes both structure and content.

Since the early days of e-government, jurisdictions from an internal managerial perspective have been focusing on standardisation, departmentalisation and operational cost-efficiency, which Ho (2002) has labelled as the traditional bureaucratic paradigm. Often, the way that public services offered to citizens were grouped together was determined by the internal structure of the specific government. Each department offered their services on separate web sites independently from the online offerings of other departments.

E-government has not always delivered all the benefits that were hoped for (Dada, 2006). A more holistic view of government reform strategies has been proposed under the term "Transformational Government", which is defined as "a managed process of ICT-enabled change in the public sector, which puts the needs of citizens and businesses at the heart of that process and which achieves significant and transformational impacts on the efficiency and effectiveness of government" (OASIS, 2012, p. 7). Proponents of the "Transformational Government" approach promote a new business model for governments that introduces "a new virtual business layer within government, focused round the needs of citizens and businesses (the "Franchise Marketplace"), which enables the existing silo-based structure of government to collaborate effectively in understanding and meeting user needs" (OASIS, 2012, p. 16). The "franchise" metaphor is used here to denote collaborative organisations for specific customer segments for government services (e.g. parents, motorists, disabled people), following the principle of "Build services around customer needs, not organisational structure" (OASIS, 2012, p. 13), which requires governments to re-think and re-design their service delivery on all levels of the organisation. At the front end, governments have started to investigate the use of one-stop online portals (OSPs) (Kohlborn, Weiss, Poeppelbuss, Korthaus, & Fielt, 2010) following the desire to further increase customer satisfaction and operational excellence. These portals commonly apply the 'single window concept', i.e. they offer a single point of access to electronic services and information provided by different public authorities or even private service providers (M. Wimmer & Tambouris, 2002).

19 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/smart-city-portals-for-public-service-delivery/211309

Related Content

Ethical E-Participation: Reasons for Introducing a 'Qualitative Turn' for PPGIS
Marco Piconeand Francesco Lo Piccolo (2014). *International Journal of E-Planning Research (pp. 57-78).*
www.irma-international.org/article/ethical-e-participation/122428

Tools and Technologies for Smart Education in Sustainable Smart Cities
Ricardo A. Barrera-Cámara, Alejandro Fuentes-Pennaand Maria Beatriz Bernabe-Loranca (2023).
Management, Technology, and Economic Growth in Smart and Sustainable Cities (pp. 156-173).
www.irma-international.org/chapter/tools-and-technologies-for-smart-education-in-sustainable-smart-cities/332899

Legal Logistics: A Framework to Unify Data Centric Services for Smart and Open Justice
Niels Netten, Susan W. van den Braak, Mortaza S. Bargh, Sunil Choenniand Frans L. Leeuw (2018).
International Journal of E-Planning Research (pp. 51-69).
www.irma-international.org/article/legal-logistics/197371

Visualisation and Auralisation for Perception-Driven Decision Supports in Planning: A Comparative Review
Like Jiang (2019). *Smart Cities and Smart Spaces: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 470-489).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/visualisation-and-auralisation-for-perception-driven-decision-supports-in-planning/211304

Allocation of Residential Areas in Smart Insular Communities: The Case of Mykonos, Greece
Chrysaida-Aliki Papadopoulouand Thomas Hatzichristos (2020). *International Journal of E-Planning Research (pp. 40-60).*
www.irma-international.org/article/allocation-of-residential-areas-in-smart-insular-communities/261848