Chapter XXI
E-Governance and Quality of Life:
Associating Municipal E-Governance with Quality of Life Worldwide

Marc Holzer
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, USA

Aroon Manoharan
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, USA

ABSTRACT

The chapter is based on the results of an international survey of municipal Web portals conducted through a collaboration between the E-Governance Institute at Rutgers-Newark, USA, and the Global E-Policy E-Government Institute at Sungkyunkwan University in Seoul, South Korea. The joint study ranked municipalities worldwide based on their scores in 5 e-governance categories of security and privacy, usability, content, services, and citizen participation. Crucial trends in the development of the municipal Web portal indicate a growing digital divide between cities belonging to the OECD and non-OECD nations and to explain this divide, the relation between e-government service delivery, and quality of life across the globe is examined. Studies on user satisfaction, well-being, and the quality of life under e-government are important so as to understand the societal impact of the use of information and communication technology in public service delivery.

INTRODUCTION

The dawn of the information age and the growth of Internet have led to governments increasingly computerizing their services to citizens around the globe. Governments are transforming into e-governments with public information and services increasingly offered online. This phenomenon is broadly referred to as e-government. "E-government, the application of ICT within

public administration to optimise its internal and external functions, provides government and business with a set of tools that can potentially transform the way in which interactions take place, services are delivered,…. and citizens participate in governance…" (UNDESA, 2003, p.1). Norris defines e-government as "….the delivery of services and information, electronically, to businesses and residents, 24 hours a day, seven days a week" (2001, p.5). There are three stages in introducing e-government: 1) publishing government information online; 2) interacting, where ICTs are used to encourage civic participation in government decision making; and 3) transacting, where government services are accessed online (CDT & infoDev, 2002).

The internet is also a convenient mechanism for government to conduct citizen-participation exercises, with the potential to decentralize decision-making. Many scholars and practitioners of e-government have expressed confidence in its potential for e-democracy and citizen participation online. According to Korac-Kakabadse and Korac-Kakabadse (1999), the Internet raises the possibility for large scale e-democracy. They define e-democracy as the capacity for ICTs to enhance the degree and quality of public participation in government. ICTs also help citizen groups to "do research on the web, build links with online communities, host their own websites to post reports, and make use of email to connect with their peers" (Bridges.org, 2002b). The City of Seoul's Online Procedures Enhancement for Civil Application (OPEN) system is an example of a successful practice of transparency and decreased corruption in government via the use of the Internet (Holzer & Kim, 2004).

As the use of e-government became popular, academicians have conducted research on the potential effects of e-government. Unlike televisions and radios, computers enable citizens to demand and obtain desired information when online (Browning, 2002). Experts in the field are increasingly acknowledging that achieving good

governance in today's networked world requires internet-based services and other technological service delivery applications which will be the only way governments will be able to achieve their own service delivery goals (Cloete, 2003). A Pew Internet & American Life Project study examining how Americans contact their government found that e-government is an increasingly popular tool for online users to get information and send messages to their public officials (Horrigan, 2004). Another study by Gant & Gant (2001) finds that in a span of five years, from 1995 to 2000, the number of both public and private web portals across the globe rose from less than 20,000 to more than 10 million.

BACKGROUND

Much of this research on the performance of e-government has focused primarily on the public agency, with less consideration of the societal impact of providing services online. Traditional methods of measuring government service, both online and offline have focused on the public official or administrative tool as the central element. Behn's "three big questions of public management" consider the public bureaucrat as the framework of measurement and improvement, thus ignoring the social consequences of public administration in a democratic society (Kirlin, 1996). In this context, an important consequence of the growing use of computers is the growing digital divide among nations and also within nations both developed and developing. Digital divide is not just a divide that applies to people but it can be applicable on a larger sale to countries. Some countries are ranked higher while some are ranked lower on the scale measuring the degree of digital divide.

The term digital divide may imply more than one thing. In simple terms, it refers to the "gap between those people who have access to digital technologies and information on the internet, and

Related Content

Factors Affecting e-Government Technology Adoption Behaviour in a Voluntary Environment
Chowdhury Golam Hossanand James C. Ryan (2016). *International Journal of Electronic Government
Research (pp. 24-49).*
www.irma-international.org/article/factors-affecting-e-government-technology-adoption-behaviour-in-a-voluntary-environment/155186

The Functionality of Website-Based Services of Metropolitan Municipalities in Turkey
Bekir Parlakand Zahid Sobaci (2009). *Handbook of Research on Strategies for Local E-Government
Adoption and Implementation: Comparative Studies (pp. 437-460).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/functionality-website-based-services-metropolitan/21474

Smart Cities and Their Roles in City Competition: A Classification
Leonidas G. Anthopoulosand Panos Fitsilis (2014). *International Journal of Electronic Government
Research (pp. 63-77).*
www.irma-international.org/article/smart-cities-and-their-roles-in-city-competition/110957

Implementing a Sound Public Information Security Program
Stephen K. Aikins (2008). *Handbook of Research on Public Information Technology (pp. 689-698).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/implementing-sound-public-information-security/21289

Hot-Spot Geoinformatics for Digital Governance
G. P. Patiland R. Modarres (2007). *Encyclopedia of Digital Government (pp. 919-927).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/hot-spot-geoinformatics-digital-governance/11612