

Would E-Government Promote e-Governance? A Proposed Restructure to Promote Democracy and Participation of Public in the Decision Making Processes for Environmental Policies

Ghazzawi Khalil¹

Abstract

The "Tragedy of the commons" is a real phenomenon that is currently observed worldwide. It is the dilemma and conflict between one's self interest and the rest of the public interest in managing and sustaining our natural resources, despite that each individual might be acting rationally, the result may be devastating and leads to the depletion of our precious natural resources. Thus public consensus concerning the proper and adequate use and management of resources are of utmost important to ensure the sustainability of our resources and environment. The county's/regional's political procedures and structures of how to reflect the majority of public opinion is some time unable to reflect the true concerns/opinions. As such, the need to search for a mechanism that can allow the true participation in the decision making process is a must. Our world is currently witnessing major detours in the areas of developing, implementing and managing styles of public organizations. EGovernment must be able to offer a shared processor and transparency toward citizens. This paper will provide a suggestion of a new behavior for the e-Governing by the administration to promote e-Governance 'the continuous optimization of service delivery constituency participation by transforming internal and external relationships through technology and internet', based on the combination of the e-Democracy and e- Government. Moreover, modernization's efforts starting with decentralization seeking the use of new information and communication technologies, should take a significant role in the governmental action plans. Finally, it is believed that applying such concepts and procedures to publically debatable issues such as environmental issues and policies may pave the roads towards a more successful application in other areas, specially other political process.

Keyword: Information and Communication Technology, Internet, e-Government, e-Governance, e-Democracy, Public Service, Citizens, Participation

¹ Chairman of the Management study Department, Assistant professor, Rafik Hariri University.
Email: Ghazzawika@rhu.edu.lb

Introduction

In 2011; Arab countries and the entire world followed what happened in Tunisia and Egypt. Two Arabic regimes were step down in the same month. On January 14, 2011; the Tunisian president Zein Abedeen Bin Ali escaped outside of Tunisia after 27 days of protests. In Egypt, on February 11, 2011; the strongest Arab president Mubarak resigned and left Egypt after very active protests at all cities of Egypt. The Egyptians have a record because the protests continued for 18 days only!! A new history is being written in Arab countries.

The Arab countries are living actually the large reform movements. The revolts in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and in many other countries are driven by a large degree of dissatisfaction with the authoritarian regimes and their corrupted government. In this situation we can insure that the internet and all the other information technologies where the main weapon for those democratic movements. It's the silicon revolution (notification).

The major problem in the arab region that we see a society that moves at a place faster than most government do. The fast social adoption of internet has taken a dramatic deviation in those regimes. We can say that old fashion authoritarian governments are gone and the solution is to start a new governmental age called the e-government. This for we can start the talking about the important of having e-government. A political system that integrated in a large part on his work the internet not just a tool of development but it seems to be important as a tool of social protection. Does internet support the political reform in the Arab Countries?

Through the history, there's no conflict about reasons of the revolutions anywhere in the world. It might be social, economic, or political reasons. Almost the same reasons for all revolutions since the early history of the humanity, but the revolutions of the modern age are different by depending on new means, and for sure communications and information technology was the most effective factors in the modern revolutions.

Opinions might be conflicted, about the role of internet some people can see that all revolutions through the history succeeded with the absent of technology, and if people stayed in front of PCs screens, who would participate in the demonstrations and manifestations.

On the other side, many opinions say that the online social networks provided e-communities helped to promote the anti governing systems ideas, and to call and organize the demonstrations, and to disseminate news from the heart of the events. Regardless of this conflict, we have a striking phenomenon and should be monitored. The online social networks played main role in Egypt's demonstration in January 2011, mainly, Facebook and Twitter were the basic tools used in the demonstrations. We can define three main roles for the e-community in political movement in the Arab world; Call for demonstrations, dissemination of demonstrations news, and increasing information circulation. Where do governments fail in this phenomenon?

The observer of the situation can insure that the Arabic government was totally absent from the e-society and the political power didn't give any importance for the technological advancement happening in their society. At the same time, The Arab world has experienced an awakening of free expression using the internet, that has now entered the body politic of the arab government and has helped break down the stranglehold of state-sponsored media and information monopolies in those countries. Indeed, the Arab world has witnessed the rise of an independent vibrant social media and steadily increasing citizen engagement on the Internet. These social networks inform, mobilize, entertain, create communities, increase transparency, and seek to hold governments accountable. To peruse the Arab social media sites, blogs, online videos, and other digital platforms is to witness what is arguably the most dramatic and unprecedented improvement in freedom of expression, association, and access to information in contemporary Arab history.

E-Government is a key instrument for modernization and reform as governments face the continuing pressure of increasing their performance and adapting to the pressure of the new information society. The ability to improve citizens' access to services has made e- Government an attractive investment for government organizations, fuelling worldwide implementation of such applications. Electronic government, or e-Government, is enabling government organizations to provide better services to their constituents.

Transactions such as filing taxes online, applying for jobs, renewing driver's licenses, and ordering recreational and occupational licenses can now be conducted online, quickly and efficiently^[1].

As many public sector organizations are either planning for or implementing major e-Government projects, there is a growing need to understand how these projects can be successfully managed for maximum realization of their potential benefits^[2]. Good, reliable trustworthy public services built around the needs of the citizen are essential to a modern, fair and dynamic society^[3].

One important issue in e-government studies is whether government web technologies impact public sector performance. Although e-government initiatives have been credited as engines of governmental reform, empirical evidence is insufficient to determine their effects on public agency performance. Some researchers have recently assessed how agency websites may help improve public service delivery, citizen participation, and trust in government^[4].

Government services are expected to be socially inclusive. This means that all citizens who want to must have ready access to these services. It also means that all such citizens must have the ability to use the system and also feel confident using it. This presents enormous challenges to government as it implies ready access to computers and an adequate degree of Information and Communication Technology literacy.

In developing e-Government services, the readiness of citizen groups to use self-service channels must be taken into account, as must the complexity and requirements of the service. A high proportion of interactions between citizens and the public service are in the areas of health and social services where citizens tend to be elderly, in poor health and of lower educational and income backgrounds. Many of these will require assistance in accessing public services, either at front desks or over the telephone. They may not be in a position to benefit from a self-service channel where the citizen has to do much of the work of data entry.

This paper aims to find answers to the following points:

- The role of Information Technology (IT) in the development of public service.
- To evaluate the degree for the improvement of e-Government applications
- To study the possibility promoting the e-Government by adding more interaction to reach a high level of citizen participation (e-Governance)

Literature Review of E-Government Research and Studies

Many approaches[5] have been established towards founding an e-Government stages model^[6]. Although the models differ in the numbers and names of stages most of them have similar characteristics for each stage. One of the most used, however, is Gartner Group's1 model that classified e-Government services offered online into four evolutionary phases:^[7]

1. Publishing (web presence)
2. Interacting
3. Transacting
4. Transforming

Publishing is the earliest stage where static information about the agency mission, services, phone numbers and agency address are provided for further communication. *Interacting* goes one step further by enhancing the site's features with search capabilities and intentions-based programs. *Transacting* represents a full-featured online service that allows users to conduct and complete entire tasks online. *Transforming* is considered to be the long-term goal of almost all e-Government services. In this stage all information systems are integrated and services can be obtained at one virtual centre^[8].

There are few research studies on e-Government and most of these studies focus on general e-Government implementation framework. The technological infrastructure aspect of e-Government dominated most research studies. For example, Leigh and Atkinson^[9] focused their work on evaluating government's web sites and provided recommendations on how to improve the design and functions of web sites to make them more useful and easier to use by citizens.

One study tried to answer the question of what makes people use or not use the online services offered by the government. The study was based on two sets of secondary data -in thirty countries- to examine the use of online government services.

It identified four factors that are significantly associated with the use of online government services.

Countries with heavy usage of e-Government services are:

1. Rich (high per capita GDP)
2. Have better access to Internet
3. More competitive and less restricted ICT environment
4. They spend more money on ICT

All these variables were found significantly and positively correlated with the online usage of government services^[10].

Information and Communication Technology and Government

Efficiency

Government organizations have public functions that are of general interest to citizens and business. While exercising their tasks like research, policy making, policy execution, democratic control, communication with the citizens, and internal administrative processes, information will emerge. The use of Information and Communication Technology increased the possibility of providing this information regardless of place and time. "Electronic government information can be acquired by the use of a computer and a network. It therefore allows easier policy coordination among ministerial departments, public agencies, and layers of government." ^[11].

An advantage that the Information and Communication Technology has provided governments with is the ability to improve the efficiency of government agencies and enhance business processes for public administration, which in their turn will lead to higher quality and customer oriented service delivery. The advantages of the e-Government lie also in the possibility to involve citizens and businesses in certain decision making processes as well as administrative processes. Example are the possibility to check the neighborhood safety in the city, the request for a license of some sort, or access to the most recent data timely enough to anticipate for instance plane arrivals and departure, and traffic jams etc. "The electronic government can provide a standardized window to citizens, which will enable them to have access to any public service, regardless of which organization is in charge of it and where it is produced." ^[12].

There are already developments that families will be notified electronically whenever they qualify for housing benefits or for the possibility to register electronically for building site. Due to links between systems, mistakes and incorrect data are easily detected, thus fraud is less tempting.

E-Democracy Model from Participatory to Representative Democracy

In participatory democracy, citizens participate directly in decision-making, usually by voting. The act of voting is seen as distinct from the public debate that precedes it. Voting is the quintessential democratic act. It is the primary expression of our belief that citizens of a democracy are free and equal. Supposedly, the democracies of ancient Greek city-states, such as Athens, were essentially participatory. Citizens gathered together to debate and then vote on key issues. However, with the rebirth of democracy in the 18th century, states were no longer cities, but whole countries with large and sometimes culturally diverse populations. In addition, most had developed bureaucracies, and considerable holdings and responsibilities.

Participatory democracy was not feasible in such a society. Populations were usually much larger than in the Greek city-states and citizens did not have the time, expertise or inclination to participate in every debate or vote. In addition, they lived in different cities, often separated by considerable distances, so that the process of voting would have been preventively expensive and slow if every citizen had to be present for every vote. This issue was resolved by allowing citizens to choose representatives to stand for them in government and act on their behalf. It is worth pausing to underline that not even ancient Greek democracy was fully participatory. There is always some delegation of authority to an official who is empowered to make decisions on behalf of citizens and who, in this sense, is a representative. Given the number of decisions that must be made in any modern government, it is hard to imagine how things could be otherwise. But neither is any democracy fully representative. At the very least, citizens must participate in elections to choose their representatives. Most democracies contain a host of other participatory mechanisms, ranging from referendums to community-based partnerships.

The two models of democracy therefore are best viewed as ends of a continuum. Most modern democracies are a complex combination of the two that has evolved over the years. Thus, in Canada, there are federal, provincial and municipal legislatures with elected

Representatives. Even so citizens also participate in public decisionmaking in all kinds of ways, ranging from national referendums to the management of regional health organizations or community daycare groups.

In the end, most of the really interesting debates about the future of democracy are not abstract ones over which form of democracy is better, participatory or representative, but practical ones about how, where, when and why a particular decision-making body or process should favor one approach over the other.

of an inevitable technology driven revolution? Will it bring about direct voting on every issue under the sun via the Internet? Is this just a lot of hype? And so on. Just as there are many different definitions of democracy and many more operating practices, e-Democracy as a concept is easily lost in the clouds. Developing a practical definition of e-Democracy is essential to help us sustain and adapt everyday representative democratic governance in the information age. E-Democracy is the use of information and communications technologies and strategies by “democratic sectors” within the political processes of local communities, states/regions, nations and on the global stage. The “democratic sectors” include the following democratic actors:

- Governments
- Elected officials
- Media (and major online Portals)
- Political parties and interest groups
- Civil society organizations
- International governmental organizations
- Citizens/voters

Each sector often views its new online developments in isolation. They are relatively unaware of the online activities of the other sectors. Those working to use information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve or enhance democratic practices are finding e- Democracy a lot more challenging to implement than speculating on its potential. This is why it is essential for the best e-Democracy lessons and practices to be documented and shared.

This simplified model illustrates e-Democracy activities as a whole. Building on the first diagram, it sits as a filter on the "input" border between citizens and governance in first diagram. The Internet has proven an effective tool in several occasions for ordinary citizens to pressure government to better address social issues. The information was rapidly disseminated through the Internet. ICT has recently become a key medium through which ordinary citizens convey their discontents or suggestions to government bureaucracies.

Can Government Exist and be Efficient

E-Government is thought to increase transparency of governmental functions, both to businesses and citizens, and to result in a more "customer oriented," responsive, approach by government.

Through e-Government, citizens and businesses are believed to gain ready access to governmental information and operations. The end result of this process is often thought to be a major restructuring of power between government and its citizens, enabling citizens more effectively to control government and guide its functions (perhaps even on a day-today basis) through electronic voting and other types of electronically interactive participation made possible by the Internet. We believe, however, that such developments, while welcome, are not inevitable. Rather, we believe that the potential risks of e-Government must also be recognized and addressed. Like the Internet, e-Government is neither good nor bad in itself but can be used or misused to achieve and further the goals of the particular society in which it operates, or to obstruct pursuit of those goals.

A democratic and open society may use e-Government to become even more open and democratic. Conversely, a closed, tightly controlled society may use e-Government to assert even more control over the dayto- day lives of its citizens.

Existing democratic countries also may implement e-Government initiatives in ways that offer the potential to undermine, rather than reinforce, important societal and political values.

Thus, whether e-Government initiatives will result in movement toward e-Democracy depends upon the social and political environment in which they are implemented and the effectiveness of those implementation efforts. If e-Government is to be used to advance e-Democracy, we believe that it needs to be viewed in a more realistic manner – in much the same way that our understanding of e-commerce has developed. Who can forget those early days of e-Commerce and the “dot com” phenomenon, when traditional business rules were thought to be a thing of the past – when any company could simply put “.com” behind its name and become an overnight success (without worrying about such mundane issues as profitability and the bottom line)? That early, and unrealistic, perspective now has been abandoned. Instead, it has been recognized e-commerce is not an answer in itself but a tool to be used, or misused; strong companies will use the Internet and e-commerce to become stronger and weak companies, Internet or not, will fail. So, too, it is with e-Government.

Fig.1 Efficiency of Governments exist Throughout Citizens Implication in the E-environment

Why Governmental Process Reengineering? (GPR)

GPR is all about review, re-looking and redefining the way (in terms of processes, procedure, trust and spirit, mindset, attitude, ...) Government needs to operate, interact, interface, and transact with its stakeholders (Citizens, Employees, Business, NGO, other Government agencies within India and other Countries, International bodies, ...) in ever changing times. GPR is more need of the hour for Governments than a matter of choice anymore for all practical reasons. GPR primarily deals with right from ‘optimization’ through ‘redefinition’ of processes and procedure that Government needs to interact, interface, and transact with its stakeholders in ever changing times.

Challenges posed by Globalization, ever changing expectations of all stakeholders, emergence of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and continuous technology advancement, ever growing volumes-complexity-&-competitiveness, are among the key reasons causing the need for GPR.

In fact in today's times, even the definition of Government is changing in terms of role of Government and expectations from Government. Even today, Government runs on the policies, processes & procedures those were defined ages back. Most of them have become dated and require comprehensive review and redefinition.

Just to make a reference here, Governance primarily has two streams (a) Social and (b) Commercial. In last two decades, Government services falling under 'Commercial' have undergone reforms & change like Telecom, Aviation, Banking, Railway, ... There are other services like direct & indirect taxation, treasury, ... which have witnessed decent level of reforms. There are sectors like Transport, Land record, External affairs that are catching up with some bit of reforms. However social sector (Agriculture, education, healthcare & family welfare, Rural & Urban development, women & social welfare) has not been able to draw the serious attention.

For sure, whatever reform initiatives have happened so far; they are certainly done by compulsion. Due to natural reasons understood, areas covered under social sectors have been seriously neglected and/or yet to catch up the serious attention. The Corporate world too always had and still faces all such challenges and competition as added factor; however Corporate(s) across the board have successfully adapted to the change. For Corporate, it was not the matter of choice, but it was a compulsion and the matter of survival. Irrespective of size across industries, the fittest and those who have been adopting the change timely have survived, grown, and diversified. Again, 'adopting the change' is a continuous process and like a journey even for corporate sector.

Where Citizens Stand in the Concept of e-GPR?

The service and convenience benefits of e-Government are widely touted[13]. If deployed to create useful administrative knowledge on citizen's satisfaction, electronic process reengineering can help e- Governments avoid problems and set priorities.

Increasing citizen satisfaction and service is the bridging outcome between traditional e-Government projects and online efforts to promote participatory e-Democracy.

At a minimum, governments need to design their online transaction services and information portals such that they gather structured input and useful feedback. While governments do not compete with other government websites providing the same service, they are competing for citizen time and attention among the millions of other online options citizens choose from everyday. Governments also need to be mindful that established media brands and online portals are the main source of online political news and links from those sites to government source materials can bring in desired citizen —eyeballs (web site visitors).

While this analysis suggests that specific staff-led e-Democracy policy work, making e-Democracy technology functions available in an integrated way across the whole of government makes sense. Government e-Democracy tools are best implemented as part of the overall e-Government technology-base whether tied to a specific agency or as an aggregated service provided by a central agency. Governments need to avoid isolating e-Democracy technology services from the bulk of their technical expertise and resources.

On the road to measuring citizen satisfaction is the intentional generation of a —demand-function for e-Government. Tools such as web site surveys and comment forms, telephone surveys of the general public and registered site users, comment forms generated at the completion of a transaction or query, page-based content rating options and focus- Group meetings with diverse or target user groups can all be used to generate ongoing input and an essential sense of demand. However, governments need to take risks on new online features because most citizens will never demand something they don't conceive of as possible. It should be noted that what citizens say they want online and what they do online are often two different things. People say that they want privacy policies, but very few access them[14]. Citizens may say they want e-Government that promotes accountability. Learning more about what e-Government users actually do online will help governments prioritize the investments required to enhance information access and dissemination, service transactions or to build new tools, like online consultation facilities, that support participatory democracy.

Fig. 2: E-Governance is more than e-Government

Opportunities to learn what citizens actually do online, while being mindful of their privacy, include usability studies (often in a laboratory setting), basic web site user log analysis, advanced statistic generation (generating log records of click out links from a main government portal to another government web site), and focus group meetings organized with users based their frequent use of an online service. Providing improved service based on these inputs is a starting point for e-Democracy within e-Government. It recognizes the role of citizens in directly shaping the development and provision of a government service.

Service also implies the adoption of tools and best practices from across the online industry into the whole of e-Government. The expectations of citizens online today are dramatically different than in 1997 when e-Government first became more widely spread. While the idea that the Internet was inherently democratic may have deluded many into thinking its use would produce a wave of democratic reform that would wash over government and politics, there are still a number of technological enhancements that may dramatically deepen participatory democracy for citizens. Technologies like e-mail notification, email/correspondence processing are complemented by the use of content management systems that allow distributed publishing across an agency, personalization features, and on-demand access to audio and video archives of public meeting recordings.

E-Governance: a Response in Favor of Citizens' Expectations

As citizens' expectations of government have increased, so has the pressure to improve public services. With access to more information (e-Government applications) than ever before, people are becoming more knowledgeable (information about the technology infrastructure), more vocal about their needs and more sophisticated in their expectations of how government should meet those needs. At the same time, of course, governments are under growing pressure to do more with less (financial crises that affect almost all the public investments). Budgets are static or shrinking—even as citizen expectations and demand for services continues to grow.

Over the last decade, public service organizations around the world have invested heavily in technologies to improve service delivery and realize cost efficiencies. Collectively known as “e-Government,” these initiatives were designed to meet a range of organizational challenges— such as improving public access to information and services through online channels; sharing data within and across organizations; improving the efficiency of business processes; and managing organizational performance. While investment in e-Government has delivered significant benefits, these solutions also have limitations when it comes to public service delivery and reform. People are no longer content to be passive consumers of services.

They expect a different kind of relationship with their government— one that places individual needs and expectations at the heart of public service planning and delivery. This new relationship is characterized by the more active involvement of citizens and other stakeholders in identifying priorities, influencing decision making, shaping policies, designing services, holding governments accountable for results and even jointly contributing to service delivery.

In light of today’s changing citizen expectations, governments have begun developing strategies to not only enhance efficiency and effectiveness, but also to strengthen the relationship between government and citizens. While e-Government has been largely a one-way street— with government delivering and citizens receiving—these new e- Governance strategies enable government and citizens to engage and partner with each other and other stakeholders. In doing so, they are leveraging new technologies and modifying conventional service provision in innovative ways to create public value. It is a development that is gaining momentum as citizens respond positively to the new information, debate and participation that government and non-

Governmental community e-Governance tools make possible. People do indeed want to become more engaged in their governance processes. They want to be more informed and to have a bigger say in how government true the e-Government applications acts to make their lives better. From that perspective, we formulate that e- Governance will help in building a trust-based relationship between Citizens and their government. The e-Governance model should be based on the concept that link Citizens as service users and taxpayers, with those whom they elect to lead them and to shape and direct their public services.

The framework is built around four components as represented in the next figure

Fig. 3 the Basic Dimensions of e-Governance

1. **Outcomes**—focusing on improved social and economic conditions for citizens—such as health, learning and safety—and not merely on the amount of services provided or on efficiency.

2. **Balance**—balancing choice and flexibility with fairness and common good, being mindful that narrow application of either can widen gaps between those who are able to take advantage of service improvements and those who are not.

3. **Engagement**—engaging, educating and enrolling citizens as coproducers of public value by eliciting their views, helping clarify their perceptions and enabling them to make best use of government resources and to contribute to improving their own quality of life.

4. **Accountability**—clarifying accountability, being more transparent about government actions and performance, and facilitating public recourse by providing accessible means to remedy problems with government and public services. By adopting these strategies, government and public service organizations are transforming their relationships with citizens from one of dependency or even cynicism to one of shared responsibility. As this transformation occurs, governments are finding themselves better placed to deliver improved services and social outcomes that address people's whole life needs. That, in turn, is building trust among customers and citizens in the role that government can play in their lives.

E-Governance: a Balanced Sharing between Local Government and Local Democracy

According to current opinion, e-Government and e-Democracy meet and come together but do not interpenetrate. In the E-Governance which is the combination of e-Government and the e-Democracy we can find the true engine for the public administration modernization.

Since the development of functioning of the public authorities should include in the grouping of a set of processes (political, social and administrative).

For this, the integration of new information technologies and communication at local level for more local governance should be taken in more attention. For example, when a citizen pays local property taxes online (through 'electronic government'), it should have the opportunity to ask questions on forums, but also understand that decides these increased taxes, he must 'click' to discover the state of his community. Finally, it must be able to discuss a political forum with local officials on their budget choices (participatory democracy 'electronic democracy').

Engaging citizens in matters that affect them through the Internet and information technologies and communication is certainly one of the keys of the development of functioning local governments.

The potential interactivity of the new technologies of information and communication technologies, like any medium of communication has done so far, to radically change the interaction between citizens and local government-citizen relationship in a sense a greater transparency and greater participation. They open the way for a renewal of local democratic practices. E-democracy should be understood broadly as the exercise of democracy through active participation and dialogue and decision-making in many public spaces within the local society as well as in public spaces for political action Provincial regionally and nationally. It is the duty and responsibility of local authorities and citizens to create the conditions for participation in democratic life within organizations or in public spaces. However the public authority should not be limited solely to the online administrative information or participation in electronic voting, which represents a threat to democracy. E-Governance is then equal sharing between two tracks on the development of functioning local government, e-Government and that of electronic democracy.

E-Governance brings broader goals of social order, and it therefore involves the coordination of effort, rather than the implementation of specific programs. It is more important to have a systematic view, as opposed to a perspective focused on the practice of intervening or process. The main purpose of local e-Governance lies in the results, rather than the outputs of electronic government. Also, Environmental activism is a significant factor shaping the impact of e-Government on the environmental public decision-making.

E-Government initiatives contribute to local governance performance, but their impacts vary, depending on website quality and the entrepreneurial leadership of public managers.

In particular, recent democratization using e-Government processes in many countries brought deep institutional changes that have enabled citizens to participate in environmental decision processes and have motivated local elected officials to be more responsive to their constituencies' environmental demands[15]. E-Government initiatives can potentially provide efficient channels for local stakeholders to participate in environmental decision making, leading to enhanced decision intelligence and quality.

E-Government initiatives, however, may have divergent impacts on environmental decision making, depending on the technological, social, and political conditions of the local community. Municipalities have in recent years been empowered to set their own policy priorities, creating variations in the utilization of ICTs. Governments, for example, may differ in their technological capabilities to provide up-to-date environmental information to the public. Many social, political, and organizational factors may also cause a digital divide across communities, making performance gaps among them even wider. Additionally, despite the presence of multiple web-based communications channels, the technology's potential may be dampened when a city government lacks entrepreneurial leadership that encourages its strategic use for democratic deliberation. The technology will also have a limited impact if no institutional incentives exist for online participation by citizens.

Conclusion

This paper is an effort to provide a clearer picture of e- Governance. It was once thought that the "Internet Age" had replaced the traditional process of government. We believe that the same is true with respect to e-Governance. E-Governance does not appear to us to be an independent force for governmental openness and citizen participation that will lead inevitably to e-Democracy.

Rather, we believe it to be a far more neutral factor that will derive its value proposition from the context of the society and government in which it is applied.

If implemented with proper legal and technological safeguards, it will enhance and support democratic principles in existing democracies. These standards should encompass, among other things, legal protections for individual privacy, including standards for the collection and sharing of data by and between governments and between governments and private companies or organizations.

It is also important to remember that governments may change over time. Today's benign, progressive government can evolve into tomorrow's despotic regime, yet the infrastructure of e-Government will live on and will be available for use by both benevolent and tyrannical leaders alike. With respect to non-democratic governments, it is possible that e-Government may result in liberalization or democratization of such governments.

However, particularly in the short or middle term, it is likely that such governments will seek to utilize e-Government initiatives to extend the control they currently exercise over their citizens and to perpetuate presently authoritarian regimes. We remain hopeful that, in the long run, e-Government will support the development of e-Democracy. However, in order for this to occur, we submit that it must be approached less as an article of faith (in which e-

Government is believed to necessarily lead to e-Democracy) and more as a goal which is striven for in a thoughtful, disciplined manner. Only by recognizing and addressing the possible risks of e-Government, may its potential benefits be fully realized.

A major key issue in e-Governance is to determine the effect of web technologies on public sector performance in the environmental decision making process throughout the impact of decision technologies such as group support systems or decision support systems.

This paper provides through a long discussion that e-Government initiatives help improve the perceived performance of urban environmental decision-making. Decision making in the public sector context often involves communication-intensive actions because public managers need to grasp, coordinate, and incorporate multiple stakeholder interests into decision processes[16]. When providing well-designed interactive channels as well as access to rich policy information, e- Government helps officials reduce the costs for communication with and coordination among stakeholders.

Through a variety of online channels such as cyber forums, online opinion polls, and e-bulletin boards, public officials may efficiently hear different voices from citizens. The broad range of information officials received through these online channels helps officials scan the status of overall urban management.

Considering a wide range of information, officials can get a better sense of whether current policy programs are on the right track, to what degree citizens are satisfied with them, and which policies and programs need special attention. In particular, such information is raw, directly provided by citizens, but not filtered, reinterpreted, or edited by the mass media or interest groups[17]. Through web-based channels, officials can gain a clearer sense of citizens' ideas, feelings, and discontents about their policies. In this sense, well-designed e-Government helps identify emergent civic needs, design better alternatives, and decide policy priorities for the future.

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