

LAUNCH OF THE BOOK:

**GLOBAL STRATEGY AND PRACTICE OF E-GOVERNANCE:
EXAMPLES FROM AROUND THE WORLD**

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IGI PUBLISHER

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FEA/USP, UNIVERSITY OF SAO PAULO, BRAZIL

JUNE 1ST, 2011

18h00

The world today is at a very difficult juncture: on the one hand, it is deeply afflicted by an economic and social crisis which may have severe repercussions on the economy, society and international relations in the future.

On the other hand, science and technology are advancing in leaps and bounds, with innovations in all sectors that promise to generate goods and services to definitively tackle global hunger and social exclusion. **Mankind now has a historic opportunity to overcome poverty.**

In the midst of these possibilities, powerful instruments have been developed: the new information and communication technologies (ICT), opening the doors to a new economy, a new society, a new way to engage in politics, a new system of international relations and, most importantly, a new distribution of global power.

Just as the internet is increasingly changing government processes, recent social networking applications such as Twitter and Facebook have more recently affected democratic processes, by providing citizens with additional powers and a real capability to influence their government representatives and bypass official communication channels.

The ICTs are opening the doors for a more educated, better informed and more connected society, one that moves towards a broader middle class with new social values, aspirations and demands. The information and communication technologies are fueling these processes, **heralding a knowledge-based society capable of finding innovative and promising solutions to achieve social inclusion, a long-standing aspiration of mankind.**

Governments around the world have embraced new ICTs to increase the efficiency of internal processes, deliver better and more integrated services to citizens and businesses, invite citizen and stakeholders participation in planning decisions, improve communications and, as the recent events show, enhance democratic processes.

Thus, Information and Communication Technology is promoting a more democratic governance in today's knowledge society that highlights the importance of analyzing some "best practices" on local, national and

regional strategy and practice of e-Governance in different societies from around the world.

Our book focuses on the efforts of those societies seeking to become more democratic experiences through the application of advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) in public administration (e-government), and on processes and transformations leading to become more inclusive and participatory societies (e-governance).

The concept of Governance it is of course linked to Government and, after all, both share the same root word (*κνβερναν*) from the Greek language, which means "to steer". In this sense, governance can be defined as the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented, monitored and evaluated.

In broad terms, e-governance can be defined as the use of ICT to improve governance and government service delivery (UN, 2008). General as it is, this definition could be somewhat misleading. In order to avoid the risk of reducing e-governance simply to the adoption and widespread use of ICT in government, it should be stressed that e-governance very often aims to accompany or even initiate the transformation of government, and even of society. Governance concerns the processes that lead a social system to best achieve its goals and interests and in this sense, e-governance should be thought of as the process of making governance adequate to the Knowledge Society that is emerging worldwide. e-Governance also concerns the definition and the implementation of actions that can help a social system to evolve toward a knowledge-based economy and society.

As such, the content of our book provides a “snapshot” of the diversity of efforts to identify and understand the conditions for effective approaches and techniques for strengthening the process of democratization by deploying ICT. It does not attempt to offer simple solutions to complex problems but rather document practical approaches and experiences in a variety of local and national contexts that might provide insights that could be integrated by others in their own context.

ICT can enhance the development process in both the developed and developing world by creating new opportunities in the generation, transformation and distribution of information and knowledge, lowering transaction costs, accelerating the process of innovation and building trust between citizens and Governments. Good governance can contribute to economic growth while economic growth can contribute to good governance.

The rise of ICT led to the creation of the Information Society and the Information Society has led to the present Knowledge Society, where the application of technology evolves in economic, social, institutional and cultural contexts, creating and expanding capabilities and responding to new incentives. This can create a virtuous cycle, triggering a new economy (the Knowledge Economy), where the benefits come from the exchange of knowledge produced locally or imported and adapted to local conditions

Our book provides an overview of relevant strategy and policy –level theoretical frameworks and examples, as well as up-to-date implementations from around the world. It also offers valuable insights into best practices, as well as some of the issues and challenges

surrounding the governance **OF and WITH ICT** in a globalized knowledge-based world.

Our book is a collective effort distributed over 30 chapters, of 47 prestigious authors from the government, non-government, private and academic sectors, describing e-governance examples at local, national and regional levels from as many countries as:

USA, India, Bolivia, Macao, China, Italy, UK, Ireland, Turkey, Brazil, Ghana, Denmark, Switzerland, Colombia, Spain, Uruguay, El Salvador and Paraguay,

Furthermore the book prestige is enhanced by a foreword signed by Mr. Enrique Iglesias, former President of the IADB and present Secretary General of SEGIB; an afterword signed by Mr. Geraldo Alckmin, Governor of the State of Sao Paulo; and a chapter by Professors Edson Riccio and Valmor Slomski from the USP and Professor Gilmar Ribeiro de Mello from the State University of West Parana', Brazil.

The interesting aspect of this collective effort is that it has been carried out virtually, without any meeting "in presence". Today is the first "face-to-face" meeting we had so far since the inception of our work at the beginning of 2010. ICT has definitively transformed the way we work!

None of the chapters in our book is exclusively focused on technologies. Rather, they all point to the need for technological innovation in government to be integrated within a more general process of transformation of government and society. Interestingly enough, the chapters in the book describe experiences that, however limited and partial they could be, cover a wide variety of geo-political areas. This

means that the dominant technological orientation of the past toward e-government and e-governance is weakening worldwide. In essence, much of the debate has shifted from the simple application of e-government solutions to the somewhat wider concerns of e-governance.

In this sense, and quite paradoxically, it seems that lesser developed countries are in a better position to pursue e-governance than more developed countries are. Generally speaking, more developed countries are faced with the problem of re-aligning government and governance, on the one hand, and the socio-economic system on the other hand, which has evolved much more rapidly than government. Governments in these countries are catching up. In the case of less developed countries, on the contrary, the problem appears to be how to define and implement a balanced process of socio-economic system transformation and enable ICTs diffusion and adoption (in two ways: (i) how the socio-economic system should be transformed to accelerate ICTs penetration and (ii) how the diffusion of ICTs can foster the transformation of the socio-economic system). In defining this process, developing countries can benefit from the experiences of the more developed countries, especially in avoiding the mistakes that they have made in the past.

Our book seeks to contribute to the articulation of a sort of best-practice manifesto that national and local governments may want to pursue in their quest to participate in today's Knowledge Society. One common recommendation, found in a number of chapters in this book, is the more frequent use of public-private partnerships with various sectors and stakeholders, which will allow to share concrete experiences, lessons learned, best practices and, in general, innovation.

I conclude with the hope that the reader of this book will find some ideas and experiences that might catalyze the renewal of collaborative efforts on concrete actions to expand the symbiotic relationship

between knowledge economy expansion and strengthening democracy through transparent e-government and participatory e-governance.

Have a good reading!

DANILO PIAGGESI