

Introduction to Policies and Governance for the Network Society Minitrack

Peter Parycek
Danube-University Krems
peter.parycek@donau-uni.ac.at

Frank Bannister
Trinity College
frank.bannister@tcd.ie

Antonio Cordella
London School of Economics
a.cordella@lse.ac.uk

This year the minitrack explores a wide range of challenges associated with the creation and implementation of public policies and laws to support, facilitate, and promote e-government. The minitrack also addresses the problems of how e-government policies impact and influence governance systems and public procurement changing legitimacy and power relations. The minitrack includes one session with three papers which address these issues from different angles.

The first paper discusses the critical issue of legitimacy in relation to e-government by focusing on public e-services to citizens. The discussion is framed through a tentative model on how to integrate legitimacy in design and development of e-government. In theory legitimacy is built on legality and trust. In practice it is developed through the collaborative formation of local cultures based on common values, trust, interpretation of systems and practices. Legitimacy is crucial for democratic governance and is a basic prerequisite for all governments. Legitimacy is most often seen as generated through personal, face-to-face meetings, but e-government substitutes such opportunities for interaction. Legitimacy has in here to be gained and sustained in other ways. The main contribution of this paper is the importance of focusing on legitimacy in relation to e-government, both in policy and practice. The legitimacy of e-government is here elaborated on in relation to the local socio-technical setting and co-produced processes. Legitimacy of e-government has to be further theoretically extended to be useful and applicable for sustainable e-societies in different governmental context.

The second paper focuses on how governments in authoritarian states adapted to the challenges posed by information and communication technologies (ICTs) and persist established power relations. More specifically, the paper looks into the ICT growth-fueled tension between development and control in China. Using secondary data published by the government, UN, and other organizations, the paper unfolds the relationships between ICT advancement,

public service delivery, and political control across Chinese first-level administrative divisions. The results show that, on the one hand, ICT infrastructure and social media use positively impacts the governments' provision of public service and implementation of e-governance. On the other hand, administrative divisions with good ICT infrastructure were found most likely to be subjected to greater surveillance and control.

The third paper reveals a lack of research into public procurement in information systems literature, especially from a process focus. Three case studies from IS procurement in Norwegian municipalities are presented. By following one of the procurements systems in detail, the paper shows a process with a very strict phase division, an approach quite different from today's agile system development methods. The cases show the importance of the requirement specification which is completed before talking to the vendors. They also show the need for clarifying the content of the offer, through a dialogue with the vendor. A number of critical incidents are identified, involving the interests of different stakeholders. Continual management of stakeholders and of the procurement process through to implementation and acceptance testing is highlighted.

The three papers offer a rich set of insights -both theoretical and empirical- to address the problem of how to better account for the governance challenges that have to be faced when e-government policies are aiming at building more efficient and effective governance solutions. The papers also highlight that the introduction of ICTs in the public sector affect policies, governance, and administrative processes in ways which are difficult to be anticipated before the deployment take place. Hence, the track offers theoretical and empirical evidence to discuss why e-government policies are always associated to non-linear processes of institutional, legal and administrative transformations and opportunities to discuss how to manage these complex transformations.