

Chapter 75

E-Governance in Africa and the Challenges Confronting Urban E-Planning: Lusophone African Countries

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores trends in the development of e-governance in Africa, issues, challenges, opportunities, and innovative practices, as well as the impacts that such process is likely to have in the progress of Urban e-Planning in the continent, namely in the five Lusophone African countries: Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and Sao Tome and Principe. The first part is focused on e-governance development in Africa. The second section deals with the case of the Lusophone African countries. The level of Urban e-Planning development in African cities is in general far behind cities in developed countries. Besides sharing a common colonial history, administrative tradition, and official language, these five African countries have in common similar urban planning cultures. Despite the overall negative picture of e-governance development in Africa that emerges from this overview and the huge barriers it is confronted with, there are signs that it is possible to have a rapid and sustained progress in the field of Urban e-Planning in the near future.

INTRODUCTION¹

The increasingly generalized use of information and communication technologies in local government associated with the rapid diffusion of the Internet is one of the main changes experienced by municipalities and other tiers of sub-national government in recent years. This has been described

as the move from government to e-government in sub-national tiers of government. This transformation in the way government works and relates with citizens and other stakeholders has multiple aims. Among other objectives, the implementation of e-government seeks to improve citizens' access to government information; to increase dialogue between government and citizens and

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other stakeholders; to share knowledge within the community; to allow more efficient service provision; to increase transparency and effectiveness in all tiers of government, and in the limit to facilitate the accountability procedures (Fountain, 2001, 2005; Millard, 2008; Carter & Weerakkody, 2008; Borja & Castells, 1996). A similar change has been experienced in the field of urban planning, described as the move from urban planning to Urban e-Planning (Silva, 2010, 2010a, 2013; Wallin, Horelli, & Saad-Sulonen, 2011; Horelli, 2013), which is increasingly seen as a catalyst for a sustainable urban policy. In addition to this shift from government to e-government, the organization and the way government works is also being impacted by another process: the move from the traditional hierarchical model of public administration towards networked modes of public service organization and delivery (Silva, 2004) taking advantage of networked forms of organization (Powell, 1990). This process is described as the shift from government to governance (Kooiman, 1993; Castells, 2000, 2007; Castells & Cardoso, 2005; Hooghe & Marks, 2003; Silva, 2004), which has important consequences in the way urban planning is organized (Silva, 2010). Despite the huge progresses made within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals in the last decade such progress has been uneven worldwide. And as we move to the Post 2015 Development Agenda, the linkages of e-government and sustainable development became more obvious.

The UN Public Administration Program defines e-government as the use of ICT and its application by governments for the provision of information and public services to citizens and organizations. The United Nations (2004) in its 'Global E-Government Readiness Report' defines e-government as "the use of ICT and its application by the government for the provision of information and public services to the people". In its 2014 e-government survey report the UN offers a broader view of e-government, seen now as "the use and application of information technologies in public

administration to streamline and integrate workflows and processes, to effectively manage data and information, enhance public service delivery, as well as expand communication channels for engagement and empowerment of people". For the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2003, p. 23) e-government is "the use of new information and communication technologies, and particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government". For Coleman (2005) e-government is a mixture of e-administration with e-democracy in the sense that it combines services based on electronic information transactions with citizen participation through the Internet and other digital tools. Other authors put emphasis on the delivery of information and services online with less or no reference to the political dimension. Whatever the exact definition, all tend to agree that e-government includes a broad range of activities, grouped into three main areas: government-to-government, government-to-citizens, and government to business. Government to government is the main component of e-government (e.g., data sharing and transactions between different public departments and government tiers); government to citizen increases and facilitates citizen interaction with government (e.g., payment of taxes, licenses, other forms of transactions); and government to business includes, for example, procurement of goods and services by the government and the sale of public goods and services. In sum, e-government can be seen as the efficient online provision of government information and public service delivery, as well as a form of citizen's empowerment through access to information and participation in public policy decision-making.

The combination of these two processes, governing through networks of institutions (governance) and the use of new information and communication technologies (e-government), is usually described as the move towards e-Governance (Fountain, 2006). While the most visible changes do occur at the level of central governments, there is also ample evidence of a similar and equally

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