

Chapter 6

Government and Mobile: Examining the Role of SMS

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to study a fifteen-year project of Mobile Government (mGov) in the state of Paraná, Brazil. The precocious experience in Brazil in mGov and the number of cell phones used in the country are not arguments for these to be used in providing mass public services. Mason's Historical Method was used to get to know the project, raising available information and retrieving happenings and results. To identify events, relevant actors, their roles, aspects in collaboration, setting and density of the relations among these actors, Social Network Analysis was used. We conclude it is important to formalize the project, but that will not guarantee its continuity in the long run. Characterizing phases minimizes the importance given to the change of governors after new elections in large corporative projects. The networks forming favors the dissemination of IT knowledge among actors. This research shows little evidence that SMS still have long life.

INTRODUCTION: ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT AND MOBILE GOVERNMENT

There have been many papers focusing on e-service within the field of e-government (Islam & Scupola, 2011), and the necessary transition from e-government to mobile government (Medeni et al., 2011). This paper dwells on the experience of Paraná State Government, Brazil, using cell phones to provide services to citizens. It reports on how the Mobile Government (mGov) Project was developed from 2000 to 2014. It reports especially on the relations among the actors in the project. Paraná State Government pioneered among the Brazilian governments (federal, state and local levels) in making cell phone services available to citizens and the government itself. In 2000, services already prospered in this platform, offering

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traffic services, job opening listings, prices of agricultural products, frost warnings and giving access to cultural events. In the 1990s, in various countries, there was massive access to cell phone services. In Brazil, they greatly spread out after the regulation of pre-paid services. Brazil has the fourth largest number of cell phones in the world. In Latin America, it's the leader in cell phone lines. The potential of mobile coverage is affecting all aspects of society and economy, even Government services (Adams & Mouatt, 2010) and the numbers show the potential of this infrastructure for the government to offer m-services to citizens in Brazil. Mobile technologies can be expected to provide governments with significant opportunities to achieve greater cost optimization, and SMS has become a powerful and prevalent communication channel for citizens and government (OECD/ITU, 2011).

Despite over a decade of mGov projects in Brazil, these devices are not yet a channel for mass delivery of public services. In other developing countries, the situation is similar. One of the explanations is the difficulty to establish relations among multiple actors of mGov, necessary for a corporative model to sustain itself and be operative in the long run. Such actors include state government departments and autarchies, governmental computing organizations (computing companies), departmental computing structures within those departments and autarchies, telecommunication companies, brokers, Information Communication Technology (ICT) providers, and the main actors: citizens.

It's great the spread of mobile technology worldwide. Also great is the spread of so-called social technologies, in which the phenomena of networks are particularly visible. However, from an academic point of view, few studies have been identified in literature regarding the use of mGov, and such studies and researches do not show how and to what extent networks influence the adoption and implementation of projects using mobile technology.

The objective of this research is to document all steps faced by a pioneer mGov project in Brazil, located in the State of Paraná. The results of this work can be useful to public managers, including CIOs, who use this technology to provide new service channels to citizens, and for business partners, such as telecommunication companies. In addition, this study may bring insights to managers of corporative projects of governmental technology. In the theoretical context, this study establishes a relationship between mGov and the Social Network Analysis. The framework of social and organizational networks strength the theme Mobile Government in Social Sciences, especially in Brazilian Public Administration.

This chapter is comprised of five sections following this introduction. The first section provides background information about mGov in Brazil: Electronic Government (eGov) and Mobile Government. The second section introduces the methods used: Historical Method and Social Network Analysis. The third section describes Paraná Mobile Government. The fourth section is the discussion and interpretation. The last section provides the main conclusions from the research and finalizes with some questions for future researchs.

BACKGROUND

To present the context of the use of mobile telephony by the Government of Brazil, one must first understand how eGov and mGov take place.

In Brazil, the State reform is a historical process whose dimension is proportional to its crisis. It began in the 1970s, boomed in the 1980s, and brought about the reappearance of Liberalism with a profound critique of the forms of intervention or regulation of (or by?) the State. In the 1990s, this theme became very broad and complex, as it involved political, economical and administrative aspects. The intended

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