# Chapter 5.15
# E–Government, Democratic Governance and Integrative Prospects for Developing Countries:
## The Case for a Globally Federated Architecture

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## ABSTRACT

The objectives of this chapter are threefold: first, to provide a conceptual framework for understanding e-government as a set of four interrelated dimensions of public sector change; second, to consider the relevance and applicability of this framework for both developed and developing nations; and third, to explore the interface between domestic and transnational governance reforms in an increasingly digital era. The world in the twenty-first century needs a globally federated governance architecture, the design of which must include social, economic, political, and technological considerations. This strengthened focus on transnational governance systems must also be joined by the recognition of the dysfunctional nature of the present system of bilateral international assistance programs among countries. With improved governance conditions of transparency and trust transnationally — facilitated in part by a much more politically creative and aggressive use of new technologies, the resources allocated by each country across their various recipients would serve both developing nations and the world as a whole if they were pooled and coordinated through new transnational mechanisms.

## INTRODUCTION

The objectives of this chapter are threefold: first, to provide a conceptual framework for understanding e-government as a set of four interrelated dimen-

sions of public sector change; second, to consider the relevance and applicability of this framework for both developed and developing nations; and third, to explore the interface between domestic and transnational governance reforms in an increasingly digital era. As developing countries represent our primary interest in this chapter, efforts to meet this latter objective are sought through the prism of developing countries generally and the African continent specifically.

There is much debate within the literature on e-government as to whether digital technologies and the Internet are new tools to be deployed mainly within current public sector structures and traditions, or whether they are inherently more transformational in driving the need for more holistic changes to our systems of democratic governance. Both views have merit — as futuristic visions shape the actions of governments today that remain nonetheless bound by present processes and structures. As a result, reform is likely to be uneven and contested and it is important to have some appreciation of both levels of change. This interface between the internal and external environments, between current practices and processes and new potentials, represents an increasingly important imperative for all levels of government (as well as transnationally, as will be discussed later).

In order to be more precise on the potential scope of e-government, it is useful to turn to one definition adopted by many governments (such as that of Mexico) as of late, namely: *The continuous innovation in the delivery of services, citizen participation, and governance through the transformation of external and internal relationships by the use of information technology, especially the Internet.*[1] This definition is also a helpful starting point in underscoring the links between government and governance both internally within the public sector and externally across all stakeholders, including the public (as customers and citizens). The application and relevance of this definition, however, differs significantly across

developed and developing countries for many reasons, including the characteristics of the broader infrastructure of information and communication technologies (ICTs) across society as a whole, as well as the specific shapes and persistence of varying forms of digital divides.

Within this context the next section of this chapter presents e-government's four main dimensions, considering their relevance across developed and developing countries. Drawing upon this framework, the recent evolution of globalization is then explored in terms of the implications for both e-government and public sector reform nationally as well as for transnational governance systems. The specific case of Africa is then examined — with the aim of underscoring some key directions worthy of exploration in order to build stronger forms of governance both domestically and transnationally through e-government-inspired reforms.

## FOUR DIMENSIONS OF PUBLIC SECTOR CHANGE

In order to understand e-governments impacts and potential, a framework of four main dimensions of change includes service, security, transparency, and trust (Roy 2006). All of these dimensions are related—directly or indirectly—to the widening presence and rapidly expanding importance of a digital infrastructure encompassing information and communication technologies and online connectivity.

The first two of these dimensions are primarily focused on changes to the internal decision-making architecture of government, in response to pressures and opportunities associated with the Internet. Indeed, delivering services online became the hallmark of e-government during the 1990s, as more and more citizens conduct their personal and professional affairs online, these "customers" of government look to do the same in dealing with state, whether it is paying their taxes

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