

Chapter 12

Strategic Digital City Projects: Innovative Information and Public Services Offered by Chicago (USA) and Curitiba (Brazil)

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ABSTRACT

In order to face numerous challenges, cities need innovative solutions. Offering innovative information and efficient public services is a permanent challenge for cities concerned with citizens' quality of life and effective municipal management. The objective of this study is to describe and assess the strategic digital city projects in Chicago (USA) and Curitiba (Brazil), using innovative information and public services offered to citizens by the website. The research methodology emphasizes a case study covering the city hall, municipal departments, and other municipal entities. The results show advantages for the citizens who have free communal access to public services on the internet. Chicago offers its citizens 281 public services distributed in 256 subjects or themes and Curitiba 508 public services distributed in 26 subjects or themes. In both cities, it resulted in benefits for citizens through access to innovative information and public services offered by the internet. The conclusion reiterated the importance of the implemented innovative strategic digital city projects.

1. INTRODUCTION

In order to face numerous challenges, cities need innovative solutions. One way to innovate the city is to create projects that have the strategies and information technology as concepts and precepts. Innovative information and public services, along with information technology (IT), are relevant resources to a proper smarter government. The use of information to provide public services is a constant challenge for cities concerned with planning and developing municipal affairs from the perspective of citizens' quality of life and effective municipal management. Such a challenge requires the involvement of the whole population of the city, including municipal employees and citizens, whether they are workers,

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students, retired individuals, housewives, councilors or businessmen. Furthermore, the social, environmental, financial and political issues that cities constantly face mean that municipal managers are under pressure to adapt accordingly. At the same time, the participation of citizens in the affairs of a city is an inexorable requirement. One way of addressing these challenges is through collective information and public services at both city hall and municipality level, in which systematized information is a prerequisite for municipal organizational and management activities.

As an innovation, strategic digital city projects can contribute to the improvement of public policies and government programs through the provision of information and public services to citizens. The information can be an important resource that adds value to municipal management, facilitating the communications between the citizens and government to expand the credibility, trust and equality, while promoting accountability, transparency, and democracy. With the use of information technology it is possible to integrate the citizen to the government.

It is necessary to discuss and plan in advance for information and public services for effective integration between citizen and government. The planning of information and public services, like the municipal strategic planning, is one of the tools for managing city halls and towns of unquestionable relevance. These pressures for effectiveness can be minimized by the preparation and implementation of participative strategic planning in the cities, as it can propitiate the collective engagement of the citizens with their wishes and also can decentralize and share the local managers' decisions. Information and public services planning, like other municipal plans (e.g. Strategic Municipal Planning, Municipal Director Plan, Municipal Multi-Annual Plan, Governmental Plan and others) requires exhaustive practical exercises based on deep-seated theoretical fundamentals. These exercises are related to dynamic intelligent daily activities of the city halls and the management actions of the cities. Such activities have to be prepared in an integrated and structured way, where personalized and timely information are utilized for suitable and participative management of the cities. Evidently, these activities will be more profitable to the cities if they have effective participation of their citizens.

Lack of innovative ideas causes citizens inquiries. Many cities have problems with the inexistence or inadequacy of information and public services, which enhances the difficulties of municipal management. Compounding this is the fact that citizen participation is uneven, creating sub-optimal democracy and a lack of full contribution to urban, rural and regional development.

The objective of this study is to describe the strategic digital city projects in Chicago (USA) and Curitiba (Brazil). The project emphasized innovative information and public services offered by website. Both projects covered city hall, municipal departments, and other municipal entities, such as schools, health centers and citizen-oriented municipal information offices. The reason for that is due to structuring, storage and availability of information and public services, which surely do not happen overnight and require short, medium and long-term action in the cities.

Essentially, what justifies this research is to observe the lack of innovative ideas in cities. In particular, the inexistence of strategic projects, taking into accounts the city information and the public services, preferably with the active participation of citizens.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to have the concepts debated and understood some pertinent legislations and culture of each country must be taken into consideration.

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