Foundation for Citizen-Oriented E-Governance Models

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INTRODUCTION

The present knowledge era needs new democratic practices. The use of information and communications technology (ICT) has been considered the potential tool for rethinking democracy and political action. Working with research and development (R&D) on this potential means whole new sets of concepts, and practical solutions need to be innovated. This article describes and compares several new ICT-aided models—tested, in use, or under research—that emphasize citizens' needs as the fundamental approach to societal decision making and that regard citizens as collaborative decision makers. The new citizen-oriented approach is fundamentally transformative and calls for new innovative approaches in order to employ ICT for governance and empowerment of citizens. E-governance is considered to be an integrative concept for governance and democracy, while the focus of this article is on e-democracy.

In the foundations of e-governance lie the ensuring of universal access to data, information, and knowledge for citizens in order to enable them to build their personal knowledge base and to empower them to become independent decision-making collaborators (Keskinen, 2001; OECD/PUMA, 2000). The interactive decision-making approach calls for new models that will complement, evolve, and reform the current representative democracy to better suit the modern needs of rapidly moving and changing societies (Becker, 1995; Becker & Slaton, 1997; Keskinen, 1997). Furthermore, the potential of ICT means whole new sets of concepts and practical solutions to be innovated.

The world of the 21st century is globalized (Albrow, 1997), not only in an economic sense but also in a social, political, environmental, and technical sense (Axford, 1996; Kuosa, 2001). The Internet, global media and advertising, multinational enterprises, and brands (Florida, 2002; Klein, 2001) have created both a more global consciousness (Rifkin, 2001) supported by rapidly evolving ICT (Castells, 1996-1998) and a new geographical dimension—cyberspace, which can be seen as a complementary dimension to society. The Western world's societies have changed dramatically in the past 200 years, and the speed of change does not show any signs of slowing down. Should not old-fashioned representative democracy change, as well? (Keskinen, 2004; Keskinen, Aaltonen, & Mitleton-Kelly, 2003; Kuosa, 2004; Pertierra, Ugarte, Pingol, Hernandez, & Dacanay, 2002).

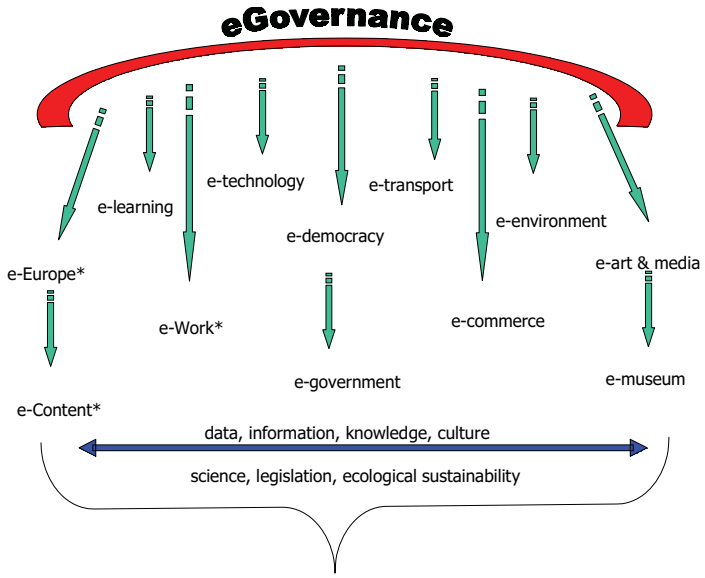
The new interactive decision-making approach presented in this article attempts to close the gap between 19th and 21st centuries' needs by emphasizing citizens' active roles in political decision making. This approach is based on legally tied participatory citizenship (Barber, 1984), as is the case in the multiphase referendum model, for example. The models should focus on citizens' needs and should regard citizens as collaborative decision makers. Political authorities should be tied with decisions taken in legally organized deliberative procedures.

BACKGROUND: BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF E-GOVERNANCE

E-governance is a novel term that has acquired many meanings, although they are rather undefined so far. In this article, e-governance is considered the integrative concept for several e-oriented methods for governing. Governance thus can mean organizational or personal governance (see Figure 1).

The figure indicates that recent R&D has focused on many different e-oriented sectors of society, especially in the latest framework programs of the European Union research and technological development. It is relevant to realize that common to all e-approaches are the understanding and development of inclusive data, information, and knowledge. Cultural, ecological, and legislative challenges are very much the same in all e-oriented R&D, and hence, the paradigms of conventional research fields will be under revitalization.

Figure 1. E-governance as the integrating approach to e-oriented R&D areas (designed and collected by Keskinen).



**These names refer to multi-annual research and development programs of the European Commission (see www.cordis.lu), whereas others refer to various sectors in general.*

Furthermore, the most important approach is that different decision models to be used for e-governance in general and e-democracy in particular can be used in different stages of the decision-making process. This means that all models of citizenship are not mutually exclusive but that they play different roles during the life cycle of the process, and furthermore, this decision also should be made by citizens through a collaborative procedure.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF CITIZEN-ORIENTED APPROACH

It is necessary to make some basic assumptions for R&D of citizen-orientation as follows:

1. Employing ICT for decision making could contribute to better decision-making procedures.
2. Transformational politics should be pursued.
3. The representative model is still a valid one, and other models are complementary to it.
4. E-governance and e-democracy can lead to societal decision making in order to become more interactive.

In addition, in citizen orientation, citizens are considered decision makers with equal opportunities with representative decision makers. The important difference to all other models is that citizens, not politicians, define the agenda; that is, this process should be interactive and based on win-win strategies. However, there has to be a procedure to coordinate this process and to avoid contingency and continuous need of voters' input. In other words, citizens in many cases should be in the role of strategic decision makers and conventional decision makers in the role of executives (Becker, 1995; Keskinen, 1997; Keskinen & Kuosa, 2004; OECD, 2001).

MODELS FOR INTERACTIVE DECISION MAKING AND CITIZEN ORIENTATION

Almost all ICT tools can be used to help deliberative and participatory democracy. Relevant and already much used tools can be listed as follows: the Internet, text messaging (SMS), digital TV, local TV, and radio and online debates. Much used models include online polls, citizens' jury, deliberative poll (televote is a specifically researched and tested version of it), drawing lot (an old model that is still usable), funnel model, e-vote, and multiphase referen-