Chapter X

Contributing to Socially Relevant Public Policies on E-Governance:
The Case of the Genesis of the Communes in Buenos Aires City

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Abstract

This chapter aims to introduce a conceptual framework and a case study that can contribute to deepen the understanding of the relation among the information and knowledge society, democracy, and development. In this chapter, it is argued that this relation has as its core issue the reinforcement of the governability and the governance oriented to development through the use of ICTs. Special focus is made on the contribution that ICTs can make in the consolidation of a public space where multi-actor, open, well-informed, equitable and transparent participatory processes allow all social actors to deliberate on the proposal elaboration and decision-making processes related to the public policies that shape their life conditions. It is expected that the preliminary contributions presented in this chapter will contribute to enrich

the proposal elaboration and the decision-making processes of the public policies on e-governance through a new approach that takes into account the complexity, multidimensionality, and qualitative aspects that characterized the social impact of ICTs in LAC societies.

Introduction

We can identify a first stage of public policies on ICTs and the information and knowledge society (IKS) in the Latin American and Caribbean region, which was mainly oriented to the development of the technological infrastructure needed to provide access to ICTs and advanced services based on them. This infrastructure development supports the expansion of these technologies from the generalization of the Internet.

Several research projects have been carried out in order to analyze the scope, success, and restraints that these policies have presented in terms of their performance about the objective of inserting the Latin American societies into the IKS.

A first and basic observation has already been largely analyzed and corresponds to the restraints that these policies have had in terms of the universalization of access to ICT and to the Internet for the whole society. It is known that the unequal social and geographical distribution of access to ICTs, known as the digital divide, represents a threat to social cohesion as it reinforces the preexisting social gaps.

Moreover, we know that a merely quantitative analysis, one that allows us to know the amount of computers, telephones, and Internet connections per inhabitant, does not offer a full comprehension about the shape that the IKS is taking in the region, about how its development impacts society, and about how the diffusion of ICTs is contributing to overcome development barriers in the region.

Now, if we consider that a merely quantitative analysis about how the IKS advances is not sufficient to understand its complex implications on development, we must conclude that neither will those public policies supported on the mentioned analysis be efficient.

In the Latin American and Caribbean region, there exists a growing stream of thinking that is oriented to research and action in favor of the development

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