

Chapter 18

A Model Proposal for Local Governments to Increase Citizen Involvement in the Age of Information Society and E-Government: Crowdsourcing

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ABSTRACT

Crowdsourcing is a form of citizen participation in which an institution has a question submits to citizens via the internet in order to get citizens to think about innovative solutions to the problem. Several municipalities around the world have already used this means, but it has not yet been clear exactly how they can use it and which preconditions play a role in this. Thus, this chapter argued the concept of citizen involvement in the age of ICT by emphasizing the two related terms e-government and e-local government, then secondly the chapter underlined the importance of the necessity of citizen participation in the policymaking process. In the third section of this chapter, it has been argued the crowdsourcing concept as a tool of participation in the age of ICT. Then finally the paper outlined a model for local governments that may use the crowdsourcing approach in the decision-making process.

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INTRODUCTION

The theme of citizen participation has long been an indispensable part of the public administration and politics. It is one of the keywords to achieve a better decision-making process regarding political decisions. After all, it has been argued that involving citizens in policy would increase the legitimacy and quality of the policy. Therefore, especially as a result of the new management paradigm which requires more citizen involvement for the more democratic society, citizens have been involved in policy development and implementation. At least that is one of the reasons why many governments apply it. For municipalities, among other things, it is not so much the question of whether they have citizen participation but it is more the question in what form. In many cases, this is mainly done in traditional ways, such as by using citizen forums, consultation evenings, or surveys. However, due to the increasing digitization of society, there are also increasing opportunities to involve citizens through online channels.

Namely, the theme of citizen participation has changed considerably in recent years due to the advent of the internet and ICT. Due to the digitization of society, communication processes have changed and the sharing of information and knowledge is no longer time-bound. Online forms of citizen participation are increasingly possible and are being used more frequently. Crowdsourcing is an online form that has developed strongly in recent years. In short, crowdsourcing means that an organization outsources a task to people outside the organization and that these people can voluntarily think about a solution to the problem posed. In the private domain, crowdsourcing has already been successfully used by various large private companies. This success raises the question of what opportunities it could offer for the government and the public sector. Various social developments have contributed to society becoming more complex, diverse, and fragmented in recent years. As a result, the government can no longer act unilaterally and it is forced to involve other parties, such as citizens, the business community, and civil society organizations, in solving social issues such as the realization of sustainable public health, clean energy or tackling the financial issues. A means such as crowdsourcing could offer a solution.

The term crowdsourcing is a neologism coined by the American journalist Jeff Howe in 2006, which is composed of “crowd” and “outsourcing”. As far as can be seen, there is no scientific definition of the term. Crowdsourcing describes the outsourcing of corporate tasks and structures to the masses of Internet users. Crowdsourcing is a form of citizen participation in which an institution has a question submits to citizens via the internet in order to get citizens to think about innovative solutions to the problem. Several municipalities around the world have already used this means, but it has not yet been clear exactly how they can use it and which preconditions play a role in this. Thus, this chapter argued the concept of citizen involvement in the age of ICT by emphasizing the two related terms e-government and e-local government, then secondly the chapter underlined the importance of the necessity of citizen participation in the policymaking process. In the third section of this chapter, it has been argued the crowdsourcing concept as a tool of participation in the age of ICT. Then finally the paper outlined a model for local governments that may use the crowdsourcing approach in the decision-making process.

BACKGROUND: CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN THE AGE OF INFORMATION SOCIETY, E-GOVERNMENT and E-LOCAL GOVERNMENT

States, especially the executive, legislative, and judicial powers that make up the public administration system; has gradually expanded the use of technology in all public institutions and organizations, pro-

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