


Chapter 2

The Present of Digital Government: Insights From Chinese Practices

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ABSTRACT

In the context of digitization, this study meticulously explores the current evolution of government models, with a specific focus on the state of digital governance in China. The progression of China's digital government unfolds across three distinct phases: technology-oriented, mutual transparency-oriented, and people-oriented. Notably, the analysis highlights a critical shift during the people-oriented phase, moving from an initial emphasis on technological deployment to a current priority on mutual transparency and active citizen engagement. Despite the visible progress, a persistent challenge lies in accurately and objectively capturing and articulating these developmental stages. To address this challenge, the study conducts an in-depth examination of case studies corresponding to each phase, unraveling their defining characteristics. The findings suggest a potential trajectory towards a digital government model increasingly prioritizing public participation. With overarching objectives, the study aims to deepen our understanding of the evolution of digital government in China, providing valuable insights into its potential future trajectory. This contribution significantly informs discussions on policy formulation and the continuous development of digital governance, offering a nuanced perspective with a keen focus on Chinese practices that illuminate the present landscape of digital government.

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INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving landscape of governance, the digitization of government functions has emerged as a transformative force, reshaping the ways in which states interact with citizens and deliver services. As we delve into the present state of digital government, this article seeks to unravel the intricate tapestry of insights drawn from Chinese practices. China, with its dynamic blend of technological innovation and governance strategies, provides a compelling case study for understanding the contemporary dynamics of digital governance. The present era is characterized by a confluence of advanced technologies, unprecedented connectivity, and a growing emphasis on data-driven decision-making. Against this backdrop, China's journey in shaping its digital government landscape stands as a beacon of innovation and adaptation. This article aims to shed light on the current state of digital governance in China, examining the practices, challenges, and successes that define its present landscape. As we navigate through the nuanced intricacies of China's digital government, we will explore key themes such as technological advancements, governance models, and the impact of these initiatives on public participation and service delivery. By uncovering these insights, we hope to contribute to a deeper understanding of the present dynamics of digital government, offering valuable lessons and perspectives for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners alike. The exploration of China's experiences in the digital governance realm serves not only as a reflection of its current state but also as a source of inspiration and learning for the global community engaged in the pursuit of effective and citizen-centric governance.

The first chapter of this book provides a detailed exploration of the past of China's digital government. Before delving into the current state of China's digital government, understanding its evolutionary journey is crucial. This chapter systematically dissects the history of China's digital government, focusing on two pivotal periods: the technology-oriented digital government (1996-2006) and the mutual transparency-oriented digital government (2007-2015). These two periods mark significant stages in China's digital governance, witnessing technological evolution, shifts in governance philosophy, and the rise of public participation. During the technology-oriented digital government period, the Chinese government emphasized the introduction and application of technology, aiming to enhance administrative efficiency and service quality. From 1996 to 2006, the introduction of internet technology signaled China's entry into the digital era. The primary focus during this phase was the internal digitization of the government to improve information management and service efficiency. This book extensively discusses the characteristics of China's digital governance during this technology-driven period, along with the corresponding challenges and achievements. Subsequently, the first chapter shifts its focus to the mutual transparency-oriented digital government period, spanning from 2007 to 2015. A notable transformation during this period was a profound shift in governance philosophy, emphasizing mutual transparency and interaction between the government and the public. The government began prioritizing the establishment of mutual trust with the public, utilizing digital means to facilitate public participation and the collaborative development of social governance. This chapter provides a detailed exploration of the characteristics of digital governance during this period, including the interaction modes between the government and the public, information-sharing mechanisms, and the formulation of relevant policies. Through an in-depth analysis of China's digital government history, the first chapter offers key insights for readers to comprehend the current state. Moving forward, our focus will remain on the present state of China's digital governance, delving into technological evolution, societal impacts, and potential challenges in the future. Based on the description in the first chapter, the current development stage of digital government from 2016 onwards can be characterized as "people-oriented digital government."

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