Governance in 2020 – what do citizens get?

Session Report from ICT 2010 Digitally Driven
by
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Title of the session	Governance in 2020 – what do citizens get?
Name of the speakers	1. Stephen Yeo (Centre for Economic Policy Research, UK) 2. Steven Bishop (UCL – University College London, UK) 3. Nikos Kryvossidis (Google Partnership Services, Global Content and Media YouTube, UK) 4. Christian Engström (European Parliament, Sweden)
Session Coordinator	Hannele Lahti (European Commission, ICT for Government and Public Services, Belgium)
Session Chair	Dr. Silvana Koch-Mehrin (Vice President of the European Parliament)
Main messages	1. S. Yeo: Current models are not adequate to deal with complex issues. Future research needs to take into account the political agenda of the decision-makers. 2. S. Bishop: How simulations might be used in a policy setting to support decision-makers through the building of decision arenas. 3. N. Kryvossidis: The evolution of eGovernment and in particular the trend towards mobile Internet and the need to develop respective services. 4. C. Engström: More privacy and data protection for citizens, more transparency of government data

1. Presentations

Dr Stephen Yeo discussed the adequacy of existing models of governance and policy-making, and he also considered the question of which are the right policy areas to test these models. Current models are still imperfect and need further improvement in order to better take into account societal trends and thus help

addressing the more complex problems involved in real policy-making. Models should include the multiplicity of players in the policy game, beyond just "the citizen" and "the policy-maker". The role of experts in the future will change as there is now a tendency to rely on the web for information and expertise via "crowdsourcing", i.e. current systems take Facebook as a model for allowing citizens to express their opinions on a policy issue, or mine the web to extract citizens' opinions in blogs and discussion groups. Current approaches are at their infancy at the moment, but one way forward could be to try to introduce some "politics" to Facebook.

Professor Steven Bishop presented the current opportunities given by policy modelling with the intention of facilitating decision-making. Communication has changed. This also changed the way in which policy-making is communicated to the citizen, i.e. communication of policies is moving towards a more personal desktop environment. We are currently undergoing a data revolution in terms of data gathering, storing, accessing, etc. there is a need to find a way to deliver advice through ICT following the processing and manipulating massive amounts of data. It should now be possible to provide decision-makers with an ICT enabled space to supporting. For instance, Decision Theatres would allow for the visualisation of global implications of their potential actions, as predicted by Global Models which integrate different systems. In this context the importance of developing comprehensive and yet comprehensible models was stressed. These may even include the policy-makers themselves. The importance of improved visualisation to support decision-makers was reinforced.

In his presentation, Nikos Kryvossidis discussed the evolution of eGovernment. In the past, the focus has been on making public services available online, however after one decade the focus is now shifting from availability of public services to *usability*. Considering the exponential change and value of prediction, after a few years some models might not be longer reliable because of changes taking place in society and ICT. Interaction has increased, in particular through mobile devices. The number of mobile Internet users will be higher than the number of PC users in the near future. But how do people use the mobile devices? The generation gap is a challenge, which should be taken into consideration ensuring that no one is excluded. Therefore the following recommendations are provided: a) meet people where they are (e.g. on facebook, and other social network sites), b) empower citizens to contribute to public services, c) governments need to embrace cloud computing and collaborative technologies, and d) redefine services for the online world. The dissemination of contents through multimedia formats is important to communicate policies thereby providing also feedback loops for citizens to express their opinions. Data access and security issues are important.

The presentation of MEP Christian Engström focused on transparency and data protection issues. Current and future approaches demand respect for the privacy of the citizens while there is great interest in increasing the transparency of governments. So on the one hand there is demand for more data to be released and yet at the same time, preserving personal privacy is a major concern among society. A personal experience with a pan European movement of people has shown that people, who have never met personally, could coordinate their activities through the internet. If an issue is sufficiently interesting then people will be able to find someone

in their network who will help "translate" data, no matter how complicated. Experts will probably still be needed to build models but it is important that the source data are available for all citizens and designated stakeholders. The discussion focused on the limits for transparency concerning public figures. For instance figures about what income, medical data combined with demographic data etc. are sensitive and should not be made available publicly. Although data sets are valuable, there might critical unwanted consequences if they are combined, published and available for everyone. However, there are big cultural differences and a European standard is hard to find.

2. Open discussion

The definition of politics and the improvement of legitimacy of public policies are important issues that affect the trust of citizens in governance. Today, the use of social networks in government/governance is minimal but should be promoted in future because it is efficient way to attract people's interest, as social networks have become part of many people's lifestyle. Access to some data may trigger service development by citizens in a free way thereby also allowing for more engagement. The difference between knowledge and opinion needs to be identified when engaging people in the decision-making process. In political debates scientific knowledge can be misused as scientists will not come up with one answer because there is often no single answer. Concerning evidence, there is no simple way to handle uncertainty and it is even possible that a group of people do not make the right decision based on the law of consensus. There is not enough information online to create the right models, but this is the first time that keeping in contact with citizens is practical possible. The session closed with a statement of Churchill who formerly said: "prediction is very difficult, especially if it is about the future".