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## A Review of: "Governance and Information Technology"

Itir Akdogan <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Communication, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

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**Governance and Information Technology, edited by  
Viktor Mayer-Schonberger and David Lazer.  
Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007. 352 pp. \$37.00  
cloth. ISBN cloth 978-0-262-13483-5.**

**Reviewed by Itir Akdogan**

*Department of Communication, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland*

Electronic government or mobile government facilitated by information and communication technologies (ICTs) is one of the most significant features of network society. It concerns governments and their information, communication, and transaction with the private sector, civil society, and citizens. Briefly, ubiquity, speed, and the low cost of ICTs are helping governments to provide better access to official information, online public services, and interaction with stakeholders. E-government not only makes the government work more efficiently but it also raises expectations for better democracy with online participation and consultation tools offered to citizens.

Depending on infrastructure, skills, finances, and mentality, e-government models vary from government to government. Yang and Rho, when they discuss the promises and challenges of e-government, refer to the United Nations (UN) and the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) identification of different e-government stages. These organizations suggest five stages: “1. emerging, which offer static information to citizens, 2. enhanced, which offer dynamic information to citizens and provides them with more options for accessing information, 3. interactive, which makes available exchanges between citizens and governments, such as form downloading and online application submission, 4. transactional, which enables such transactions as paying taxes and application fees, 5. networked or fully integrated which offers completely integrated online public service delivery” (Yang & Rho, 2007, p. 1198).

There is growing research on e-government among academics and researchers of international organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, and the United Nations. However, as Bekkers and Homburg point out, most of the e-government research done, in the first place, emphasized

customer-oriented online public service delivery. In their effort to extend this emphasis, Bekkers and Homburg suggest redesigning of the back office of agencies next to that of the front offices (service delivery) and adding interaction with concerned citizens next to service delivery (Bekkers & Homburg, 2007).

The editors of *Governance and Information Technology From Electronic Government to Information Government* present a new term: “information government.” This term is proposed neither as an alternative definition nor as a new stage of e-government. I see that this term is rather suggested as an effort to understand the changes in governance that occur due to ICTs, and the term, in a way, also contributes to the discussion of Bekkers and Homburg on extending the view on e-government.

Viktor Mayer-Schönberger and David Lazer find that there is too much research and discussion on the new technologies part of e-government. Therefore, in this book, they aim at understanding the importance of information flows within government as well as between government, business, and citizens. They believe that the important thing is the information flow. Seeing on the pages images of Sumerian tax records of 2028 B.C. next to U.S. tax records of today explains the authors’ point that all governments need information, regardless of the means. Even though they believe that ICTs are facilitating communication of information, they argue that that information flow (facilitated by ICTs) is able to make government work and the use of new technologies more efficient. They state: “Understanding of the informational dimension, we hope, will in turn inform the implementation of technologies and policies to structure information flows that simultaneously increase the efficiency of government and the deliberative capacity of our institutions and citizens” (p. 12).

This volume is divided into three parts that each consist of independent articles and case illustrations. The first

part, "Technological change and information flows in government," studies the role of new technologies in governmental information flow in the last decade, with articles entitled "Global perspectives on e-government," "Electronic government and the drive for growth and equity," and "Challenges to organizational change: multi-level integrated information structures." The following part is on "The blurring of the informational boundary between state and society." This part focuses on information flows (rather than the new technologies) and how they connect government outcomes to citizenry. Articles of this part are: "Weak democracy, strong information: The role in information technology in the rulemaking process," "Freedom of information and electronic government," "Socio-technologies of assembly: Sense making and demonstration in rebuilding lower Manhattan," and "Open-source politics' reconsidered: Emerging patterns in online political The final part, "Evaluating the impact of reengineering information flows," is about the changes in information flow within government and citizens and challenges of evaluating this change. Articles that study this topic are: "The challenge of evaluating m-government, e-government and p-government: What should be compared with what?," "Information quality in electronic government: Towards the systematic management of high-quality information in electronic government-to-citizen relationships," "It takes

a network to build a network," and "The governing of government information."

The strength of this volume comes first from its new suggestions to the discussions and researches of e-government. A study on e-government without an emphasis on new technologies is rare in the literature. The second source of its strength is its diversity of contributors. This is a collection of articles written by researchers from around the world who have brought different approaches. Last but not least, each article is followed by a case illustration, which I find a good tool to cover the topic in a more complete and concrete way. I very confidently and highly recommend it to anyone who is researching, teaching, or simply interested in knowing and exploring e-government.

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