BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND CITIZENS: DO WEB SITES MATTER FOR CREATING GOVERNANCE? SOME OBSERVATIONS ON TURKISH LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

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Abstract
Traditional information and communication technologies (ICTs) were not so successful to bridge the gap between government and citizens even if we were in a “video democracy” era. But new ICTs begin to serve for bridging the gap between governments and citizens. That is primarily the Internet. Even if we are at an early stage of adopting and shaping ICTs for social and political use, new guiding visions are coming forth as “e-democracy” and “e-government”. All these visions are somewhat a product of the internet. There is a strong link between the quality of democracy and information. The quality of the democratic process is determined by the information infrastructures that takes place in. The successful functioning of any democratic government is dependent upon efficient, multi directional flows of information. There are four categories of direction of information and communication flow; downward, upward, lateral (inward or outward), and interactive.

Both citizens and governments need information for many reasons. Citizens need information about their central or local representatives so that they can be evaluated on the basis of their record and so that representative institutions can be transparent in their activities. Representatives within elected assemblies or parliaments need information about the executives’ policies so that they can pass effective legislation, scrutinize executive functions and hold governments to account if necessary. They also need information from individual citizens and groups about those issues of local or national importance that they are expected to follow up. They do so in order to represent the public and thereby to have a strong prospect of being re-elected. In the first phase of our presentation, a theoretical framework will be drawn. In other words, we will first of all stress a theoretical framework of the subject regarding the role of internet as a new ICT on governance.

In Turkish administrative system both in central and local fields internet is began to be used very frequently. An e-government strategy was accepted in the 1990’s by the Turkish government. In the second part of this presentation, metropolitan municipality web sites will be examined and discussed as regards to the direction of information and communication flow to find out whether they serve governance or not in Turkey. We will discuss the stages of development of internet used in local governments. Then, we will examine those web sites of the related municipalities through some indicators and information-communication flow. We will basically try to answer such questions as these: Do metropolitan municipalities’ web sites function so as to provide for a flow of information from citizens to (downward information flow) the authorities? Do these sites give a chance to citizens to participate in local governments or serve only to give basic information to the public (upward information flow)? And also, whether these sites allow interactive information flow, and if so how? As a result, by evaluating web sites, we want to see the level of e-governance practices in Turkish municipalities especially in the 16 metropolitan municipalities.

1. Introduction
At the beginning of the new millennium, governments had to reconcile two important points under consideration. One of them is the developments in new information and communication technologies (ICTs) which are generally regarded as affirmative. The other one is a decline in citizens’ confidence in public authorities. Former issue is mainly related with the new ICTs which brought up new opportunities to establish democratic governments. Although, at first sight, the latter issue can be seen as purely political, undoubtedly it has multiple dimensions (economic, cultural etc.) except from the political. In many countries, citizens have been cynical about governments and their motives, or have even been disconnected from national, provincial or local affairs (Riley 2004) for many years. Every technological innovation inherent in digital era creates new linkages between governments and citizens as among individuals. New challenges and opportunities deriving from new ICTs, can be seen as an transformative agent on state especially in terms of relationship between state and its citizens. In many situations, new ICTs play an important role to increase confidence in States and governments by engaging

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citizens into public decision-making process. Thus, our major concern in this paper is the use of ICTs, mainly the Internet, as a tool of communication between states and the citizens especially in local governance level.

All these rapid changes have become more meaningful with globalization. Globalization process especially brings inevitable changes on the state. Zwahr, Rossel and Finger have argued that these changes have three distinct dimensions (2005): first, transnational corporations and non-governmental organizations (non-state actors) are increasingly gaining such influence as to force the State to share its power with them; second, multiple political levels of managing public affairs are becoming popular vis-à-vis the traditional nation-state structure. They represent the supra-national- (European, global) and sub-national (local, and regional) levels; and thirdly, functions of the State are becoming changed in three basic fields, such as service delivery, policy-making and regulation. Consequently, States opposing the obligation to adapt all the challenges depend on these dimensions. In another words, the State is at the crossroad. The reason why these enormous changes are taking place in governments in so many countries is to transform them so as to engage citizens in democratic activities and to improve citizens’ trust in those political systems (Torres, Pina and Acerete 2006). We have to stress that there is a strong link between globalization, the spread of new ICTs and quality of democracy and government.

With the globalization era, having been taken place in the last two decades, the term “democracy” and “government” are being reshaped by the economic, political, and technical factors related with this process. The relationship between the state and the citizen has begun to change due to the effects of ICTs and globalization. It is clear that to meet the challenge of declining trust, and citizen deficit, governments have to open new communication channels through ICTs, since citizens ask to become more engaged in the affairs of government, politics and economy individually or collectively. This new process bridging the gap between the state and the citizen belongs to “New times”. It is accepted as a new revolution, different from the preceding industrial one. All the factors that are effective within this process encourage new and better social opportunities, economic facilities, and political freedoms for human being (Gascó 2003). Because citizens are becoming less deferential and dependent, and more consumerist and volatile, old styles of representation mechanisms come under pressure to change. There is a widening of contemporary alienation between representatives and those they represent, manifested in almost every Western country by falling voter turnout; lower levels of public participation in civic life; public cynicism towards political institutions and parties; and a collapse in once strong political loyalties and attachments. (Coleman and Gotze 2002) ICTs have vital roles to play in this change & transformation process. In order to understand the new situation, we need to know how ICTs make a change and transform our world by its dynamic face.

2. ICTs, Politics and Governance: Challenges To Old Styles With New Technologies

The Century that we live in is called as “Information Age”. It refers to the domination of information and ICTs’ role in many aspects. The Internet has emerged mainly as a dominant form of ICT at the end of the twentieth century. In this context, as Mulder says information is used to communicate with people. Communication between partners leads to coordination of actions and when coordination is increased it leads to cooperation (1999). During this age, the infrastructure of media is also different from traditional media technologies. Changing the nature of information and media technologies alter the way we communicate, coordinate and cooperate (Mulder 1999). In order to understand this process first of all the potential of digital media has to be brought out into the open. Digital media provides for such changes: “Possibility of multi-directional interaction: ICTs support mass communication as well as communication between individuals. Everybody can ’send and receive’ where no hierarchy dominates; Time and space are losing importance: The combination of text, video, sound, and the enormous, steadily growing amount of accessible data enhance the individuals’ capacity for action and perception; Digital storage, reproduction and distribution capabilities open up changes never seen with paper as medium; Networking via computers and shared protocols are only limited by infrastructure, no longer by national borders” (Mambrey, Neumann and Sieverdingbeck 1999). Riley argues that ICTs have become better over existing social, economic and political interactions, and even introduced new forms of interactivity. Interactivity, in both social and technical sense, leads to the emergence of new relationships, connections and expectations that are difficult to control or predict, and which can bring about fundamental, even revolutionary change (2001). Although many scholars agree with the role of Internet in society, government and politics have some different approach to the direction of their impact. According to Okot-Uma, e-Governance seeks to realize processes and structures for harnessing the potentialities of ICTs at various levels of government and the public sector and beyond, for the purpose of enhancing Good Governance which is defined as comprising the processes and structures that guide political and socio-economic relationships, with particular reference to commitment to democratic values, norms & practices, trusted services and just and honest business (2000).

Norris classifies these approaches under the name of mobilization and reinforcement theories. She argues that mobilization theories emphasize virtual democracy potential of digital world. Potentially, the Internet reduces the barriers to civic engagement and expands the opportunities for political debate; it spreads the information group interaction between citizens. The Internet also may equalize social inequalities in public life. According to some,
it promises to provide new forms of horizontal and vertical communication and facilitates, enriches deliberation in the public sphere. On the other hand, approaches classified in reinforcement theories propose that even if use of the Internet strengthens, it never radically transforms, due to existing patterns of social inequality and political participation. Therefore this media will serve to reinforce, and perhaps even widen, the participation gap between the have and have-nots (2003). As it is stated above, for some scholars it is obvious that especially the Internet leads to an increase in the divide between rich and poor with relating unequal effects on civic engagement and democracy. The introduction of digital communication to civic life, may have layered a digital divide over the inequalities that disturb many political systems. Citizens without having a chance to access the Internet or with little or no literacy skills lack the ability to read critically, to navigate on the World Wide Web, and to express them in writing articulately. Finally, such citizens may become more deeply alienated from the political process and thereby more marginalized from civic life due to Internet (Fountain 2003). In our own opinion, although there are some obstacles regarding to this condition, access to digital information could lead to citizens and communities that are highly knowledgeable of civic affairs, deeply engaged in discussion and communication of their ideas and interests through on-line communication channels, discussion groups, and electronic mail to elected representatives and other political officials. The Internet could make easy mobilization of interest groups and communities with sources of important information without regard to its physical Location (Fountain 2003). Therefore, it makes possible for different people to bypass traditional intermediaries whose power turned around the control of information: national governments, the diplomatic corps and transnational corporations, among others (Caldow 2004, Coleman, Taylor and Van de Donk 1999, Weare 2002). Each of us may approach and examine today’s Information and communication technologies, especially the Internet, depending upon our special academic field. We due to our study field will emphasize the Internet within the context of political science and administrative science and try to stress the possible effects of the Internet on politics and government.

It is obvious that one of the basic problems in politics and government two decades ago was the enormous gap between the state and citizens. A decline in citizens’ confidence in State and politics on the one hand, and an inefficient, ineffective or unresponsive type of government to its social environment on the other was a basic problem that the politicians tried to cope with and investigate remedies. Some argued that private-sector management techniques can be applied to government. Thus, they explained, public agencies that are more efficient, effective, and responsive to clients would be produced compared with traditional government bureaucracies that never meet the needs of ordinary citizens as they wanted. Whereas during this new ideas formation process, alternative approaches occurred about governance. All of these were emphasizing collaborative relationships, network-like arrangements, and hybrid public-private partnerships between several agencies and organizations, which make possible more effective problem solving and greater citizen participation in public affairs than in the past (La Porte, Demchak and De Jong 2002) Not the first proposal, but the second one has been applied as a political and administrative remedy to bridge a gap between the states, governments and citizens. Since the discovery of this remedy, states and governments have been applying new methods to transform their classical types into new ones by using Internet to reduce citizen deficit. Due to this transformation process, naming of state, both functions of government and modes of citizen participation are varying. In the last two decades, scholars have focused on the Internet as a tool for transformation of governmental structures and as a way of enhancing a more democratic state. Following this path, governments and public administrations have begun to adapt and use Internet either internally or externally to increase their efficiency, effectiveness, and political legitimacy (Gasco 2003). Adaptation of the Internet to governmental and administrative processes put forward new conceptions such as e-government or digital government, e-democracy, e-participation, and e-governance. Although the notion of e-government has a narrow meaning and refers to an automated government, e-governance conception represents a broader perception. E-governance is not only automation of the public sector but also applying democratizing principles (Saxena 2005). E-government refers to use of ICTs (especially the Internet) throughout governmental information flow and service delivery stages between governments and citizens so as to establish better government. Governance notion can be separated into three fields: ‘market governance’, ‘political governance’ and ‘Internet governance’ (Wilson 2005). Similarly, Westholm describes governance interoperability among state (public sector), civil society and economy (private sector). According to Westholm, a major task of public administration within the governance triangle formed by the state, economy and civil society is the delivery of specific services to citizens and business. The concept of governance implies an efficient, law-based and citizen-oriented practice of government and administration as a precondition for a beneficial positive development of the economy (2005). Riley argues that e-governance is the commitment to utilize appropriate technologies to enhance governmental relationships, both internal and external, to advance democratic expression, human dignity and autonomy, to support economic development and to encourage the fair and efficient delivery of services (2001). Okot-Uma thinks that e-governance can be perceived as an inclusion of e-democracy and e-government (2000). But according to some other scholars, e-democracy includes e-government and e-governance (Riley 2003, Rose 2005). E-governance activities may cover a huge range from government-led initiatives to practices to improve transparency and
participation into citizen-directed experiments in participatory democracy (Balnaves, Walsh and Shoesmith 2004).

It also entirely changes the mentality of interaction between state and citizens. Although it is possible to observe these changes in e-government in terms of interaction, here only a gradual change takes place. But in e-governance the new direction of interaction is more visible and effective. In fact, public engagement and the interaction between States and Citizens refer to the same logic. We want to explain shortly public engagement-online engagement and then the basic characteristics of interaction models developed by Chadwick and May (2003). The OECD has designed a three-stage model of public engagement (2001): Information, consultation and active participation. Information includes a one-way relation between actors. The government produces and delivers information so as to be used by citizens. Here occurs passive access to information upon demand by citizens such as access to public records, government web sites and etc. Consultation includes a two-way relation in which citizens have a chance to express their opinions about public affairs and provide feedback to government such as public opinion polls, or comments on draft legislation. In active participation the relationship between state and government is based on partnership with actors. So, citizens actively participate and engage in the decision-and policy-making process (Coleman and Gotze 2002) such as forums and discussion boards. Chadwick and May also developed three ideal-typical models of how e-government could reconfigure the relationship between state and citizens as the managerial, consultative and participatory models of engagement or interaction (2003). The logic and operation of all these models seem similar to OECD’s engagement model (OECD 2003). The third stage in two models is related with deliberation and serves to establish a deliberation in government. We know that deliberation means placing citizens closer to the affairs of government to strengthen democracy, stability and transparency. In a deliberative environment citizens come together to identify and discuss public problems and possible solutions (Torres, Gunn, Bernier and Leighninger 2004). Here discussion is open to the public, free from censorship or government monitoring and with equal responsibility among participatory citizens (Kavanaugh, Isenhour, Perez-Quinones and Dunlap 2005). We think that the last two models of interaction tend to acknowledge the citizen collaboration because of opening and supporting two-way information and communication channels. This is resulting with the establishment of new structures basically citizens centered instead of governmental needs oriented as Vintar (2000) would like to consider as characteristics of new information systems. This way leads to a transformation: citizen as a partner.

3. Methodology

In order to understand the role of the Internet in public engagement it is required to examine the interaction between state, government, and citizens via web sites. There is a burgeoning literature on ICTs, politics, and governance by many researchers (Kavanaugh, Isenhour, Perez-Quinones and Dunlap 2005; Weare and Musso 2005; Dečman, Kunstelj and Leben 2004; Zwahr, Rossel and Finger 2005; Hilbert 2005). At the same time it is possible to see successful practices in the world aimed to bring citizens closer to the governments (See Dahlberg 2001; Tettey 2002; Musso and Weare 2005). The methodology of our study is based on a research which was carried out on the Web sites of the 16 Turkish metropolitan municipalities. Web sites were accessed between 20th and 30th March, 2006 and evaluated through coding scheme. The coding scheme was organized around the comprehensive guide of information and communication flow (ICF) based on engagement or interaction models. There are four information and communication flow categories. The first three of them are unidirectional in that communication is predominantly one-way: downward from the organization to the individual user, upward from the user to the organization, or lateral (i.e., outward from the organization to other governmental bodies or inward to internal groupings). It is accepted that this way of information flows shows just an informational or managerial interaction or engagement. The last one is Interactive (Asynchronous or synchronous) and it is distinguished as two-way or multidirectional substantive contacts between organizations and individuals whereby input from one side (usually the user) has a strong expectation of producing a response from the other side. In consultation, flow of information is in addition to downward, upward and lateral, may be asynchronous interactive. In the last stage of model (active participation), additionally, flow of information includes synchronously interactive category. By observing the direction of flow of information, we also form an opinion about the interaction or engagement stages among actors. The key here is that the contact is actively initiated by the user and involves a meaningful level of engagement (Gibson and Ward 2000). By paying attention to information–communication flow categories, our methodological concern basically stands on three dimensions of citizen engagement: information (managerial), consultation and active participation. We’ll evaluate the web sites contents to see what types of engagement stages occur during the flow of information and they serve what. So, by analyzing the content of Web sites, this study mainly focuses on the following questions:

a) To what extent and how Turkish metropolitan municipalities use Internet as a tool of communication with the citizens?

b) What kind of information flow is offered to the public? How do downward, upward, lateral (inward or outward), and interactive information flow operates? Do local governments use Internet to improve processes of governance?
c) What kind of engagement/interaction or e-governance pattern occurs? Does the pattern serve deliberation?
d) Is the logic of system citizen-oriented or administrative driven?

4. Turkish Public Administration System and the Internet

Turkish public administration system consists of two components: namely central government and local governments. There are 4 types of local governments in Turkey: 81 special provincial administration, 3217 municipalities, 16 metropolitan municipalities, and about 35000 villages. The first type includes neither areas that fall neither within municipal nor village boundaries. Municipalities are established in areas which have more than 2000 inhabitants in its geographical area. Metropolitan municipalities are basic urban areas that the district municipalities are organized under umbrella organizations referred to as metropolitan municipalities. Villages are governed by the head-men and they have a population of about 500-1000. Municipalities are the key components in Turkish local government system. According to the Ministry of Interior, municipality is responsible for the provision of the local common needs of the local community and provides services for the community. Basis characteristics of the administrative system are centralist, bureaucratic and hierarchical. The logic of the system is primarily to represent the interests of the state instead of the ruled class. So, a huge gap occurs between the rulers and the ruled. Historically, as a result of traditional strong state, weak society perception, central authority has never accepted to share its authority and functions with local authorities. But due to the enormous socio-economic and political changes related with globalization process and Turkey’s will to join EU, Turkish state is forced to change its inefficient administrative system. Although the beginning of the administrative reforms dates back to 1960’s, in the last decade, for an ordinary Turkish observer, incredible paths are taken in order to change the logic and operation of the existing system. One of these reforms is to transform the state and government into e-state and e-government both at a central and local level. Basic reason for these transformative paths is to reduce citizen deficit, create a public engagement, and add legitimacy to the system. Now we shortly want to examine the appearance of the developments.

The UN Report on E-Government that ranks for the top 25 countries to highlight the degree to which governments use their e-government potential among the member States bring 2 indicators into the open. According to Global E-government Readiness Rankings 2003, we don’t see Turkey among top 25 countries. Another indicator, web measure Index 2003 shows that Turkey’s rank is not satisfactory. Among 25 countries, in terms of providing specific products and social services via the Internet, Turkey is the 24th country. In spite of the web measure ranking points, in this report it is stated that Turkey has made much faster and more effective progress in its e-government strategies and programs than some of the developed and industrialized countries (UN 2003).

According to a report published in 2004, 5 million Turkish citizens connect to internet with personal computer which equals to 6.6 percent of the population. In terms of households, it is similar. Household Internet access is 7 percent. 10 percent of the population has a personal computer. 16.8 percent of the population uses computer and 13.3 percent of the population connects to Internet. There is a gap between man and woman in terms of computer use and internet connection. The ratio of man who uses computer and connects is two times more than woman. There is also a gap of usage and access the Internet among geographical regions. For example, only 1.2 percent of the inhabitants of the Southeastern region have their own computer, whereas ratio rises up to 17 percent in the Marmara region. What about the basic goals of using the Internet? The findings of a survey conducted by a national Internet service provider (Mynet) are quite interesting. The profile of average Internet user belongs to the age group between 18 and 35 at least graduated from a high school, full time or part time employee and belongs to a middle or upper socio-economic status group. The basic goal of using Internet is receiving or sending an e-mail (38% of the users), secondly making use of research engines for different purposes (36%) and thirdly making a research for education or business (28%). A typical Internet user has been using internet for 3-4 years and visits web sites 2-3 times in a week. Lastly, the average time staying connected is 1-2 hours everyday (www.bthaber.com; www.turkpoint.com).

With regard to developed and industrialized countries, use of ICTs, especially the Internet has not reached a satisfactory level both for personal or formal levels. In order to catch up with rapid developments in all over the world, Turkish government has initiated the e-Turkey project designed due to the commitments made for e-Europe+ initiative. The Prime Ministry has the leading institutional responsibility for promoting ICTs for improved public administration in Turkey. In this respect, an Information Management System Center which works under the authority of the Prime Ministry has been established to coordinate the “e-Turkey” initiative. Turkish Government’s main policy is to view ICTs as a tool for social and economic development. The State itself provide using of ICTs to increase effectiveness and efficiency of public administration, enhance transparency and accountability in delivery of public services and strengthen international competitiveness of Turkish private sector (www.turkiye.gov.tr). Currently the number of “gov.tr” in Turkey is about 3054 (www.turkpoint.com).

Another project carried out by the Institute of Turkish and Middle Eastern Public Administration is YerelNet. This portal aims to supply data about local government (legal framework, election results, e-information about services, news from local agenda, and links to city councils, municipalities web sites etc). The average number
of visitors of the portal in a day changes from 13000 to 16000. Among city municipalities Yalova municipality web site seems quite attractive. It is because Turkish government designated the city of Yalova as the pilot city for the implementation of e-Europe+ in 2002 and a pilot project is carried out as Yalov@ e-Governance Project.

5. Findings: Evaluation of Metropolitan Municipalities Web-sites Content

In this research we only focus on Turkish metropolitan municipalities web sites to observe whether they matter for creating governance or not. In order to evaluate web-sites content due to our problematic, we use some indicators for ICF that were used in web site assessment. The average percentage for assessing web sites is based on the indicators is related with four categories of ICF. Indicators mustn’t be regarded as being definitive. Researches may delete or add items due to their goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of ICF</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Information %</th>
<th>Consultation Indicators %</th>
<th>Active Participation Indicators %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Downward Flow</td>
<td>Contact Address</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>Online surveys/ polls</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mayor’s e-mail address</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>Discussion lists</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Council Members’ e-mails</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>Bulletin boards</td>
<td>93.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E-mail address to webmaster</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>Download forms</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Track local legislation</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>Information obtain form</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal links</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>Links to administr. offices</td>
<td>68.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reference links</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>Links to CSOs</td>
<td>37.5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Links to business sector</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Links to e-communities</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactive Flow</th>
<th>Chat rooms 0.0</th>
<th>Discussion with mayor 0.0</th>
<th>Electronic town meetings 0.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Synchronous</td>
<td>Message to Mayor 43.7</td>
<td>Site search 50.0</td>
<td>Number of e-mails 0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asynchronous</td>
<td>Citizen complaints/proposals 100.0</td>
<td>Number of e-mails 0.0</td>
<td>E-mail feedback 31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Citizen policy input 56.2</td>
<td>Join online campaign 12.5</td>
<td>Join online campaign 12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submit forms 62.5</td>
<td>E-voting 0.0</td>
<td>E-petitions 18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Payment 25.0</td>
<td>Guidance for companies 0.0</td>
<td>Guidance for companies 0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Average Percentages of Indicators for ICF within the Stage of Engagement

Turkish metropolitan municipalities’ web sites survey shows some evidence of interaction between state and citizens. Informational stage regarding to other two stages has a dominant appearance. The analysis of the municipalities’ web sites shows a high degree average percentage of indicators are downward ICF. If we evaluate downward ICF in detail, we need to take note of these points;

- All basic information about city (100%) and media releases related with mayor’ activities (93.7%) are published on web sites. Even this case is enough to state that web sites are typically mayor centered rather than citizen centered. The average percentage of who’s who indicator (37.5%) and mayor’s team profiles (31.2%) are similarly low. It is also a matter of mayor centered logic.
Although, the policies of the municipalities are presented (87.5%) the ratio of values is so low (25% - 4 out of 16). This is a reasonable case because local governments as being bureaucratic and hierarchical have never considered such values in the past. Step by step they are learning and practicing values such as quality, efficiency in providing public services.

The ratio of FAQ and supporting different language version is also quite low in general. Antalya and Istanbul municipalities are exceptions. Both cities are touristic. Probably as a result of tourism strategy they tend to introduce their surroundings through the Internet. Although the mayor is elected by popular vote, only two web sites provide election results.

13 out of 16 (81.2%) provide the users with documents. Mostly, they include legal framework such as code of laws and regulations. We think that on the one hand a strong state may aim to remind the rules of the system, on the other hand it may draw the borders of its responsibility.

Event calendar seems higher (68.7%) than average percentage (55%). But, calendar mostly consists of mayor’s daily program and gradually the events in the city. Reaching the municipality decision-making agenda is not easy as following the mayor’s program through the web sites.

Municipalities try to adapt themselves into new media. In this context, even if online broadcasting through webcam is under the average, in comparison to last year, it seems promising. Generally speaking predominantly one-way information flow refers to basic provision of local services through the Internet. But, all these services have only informative feature. It may derive from the traditional State and Weberian bureaucratic logic.

Upward ICF doesn’t make it possible for citizens to interact directly with state because of one-way flow. But, there is always an open door. The citizens may contact with municipality bodies, i.e. mayor’s e-mail address, local council member’s e-mail address are vital tools. Unfortunately, the level of upward ICF is low, i.e. only 3 out of 16 sites have mayor’s e-mail addresses whereas none of them provide local council member’s e-mail addresses.

43.7% of web sites provide records of local legislation. Some of those provided are out of date. Under these circumstances, a gap occurs between citizens and local legislation process so it damages local representative democracy. If the government uses the Internet to damage representation instead of creating deliberation, there are so many steps that must be taken. Lateral information flow seems operating entirely satisfactory. Indeed, ratios of access to internal links and reference links are high (81.2%). When we specifically investigate links, unfortunately, these links direct citizens to navigate within other governmental sites. This tendency never establishes let alone maintains interaction between several actors (i.e. citizen, private sector, CSOs, public sector).

In general it is obvious that consultation component is satisfactory regarding indicators shown in Table 1. For instance: 100% of web sites provide forms to obtain information, 93.7% of web sites provide bulletin board to citizens. The reason why all municipality web sites have forms to obtain information may be because of a legal obligation for local governments. According to the law code regulating the freedom to get information, citizens have a right to obtain all sorts of information they need.

Discussion lists and e-forums require human resources both technically well trained on information technologies and local government services. However, only a few staff seems to have these competences in local government. Probably the low percentage (18.7% - 3 out of 16) depends on difficulties finding suitable public servant.

56% of web sites conduct online surveys or polls. Even if the ratio is not low mostly they prefer to ask opinions about the appearance of their sites.

Lateral information flow includes links to administrative offices, to CSOs, to business sector, and to e-communities. Generally, the municipal web sites provide the users with the governmental links (68.7%) rather than CSOs (37.5%), business sector (37.5%), and e-communities (18.7%). Low percentages typically show that such a lack of information never creates governance in Turkish case because two actors of governance are absent. The way government interacts with private sector and civil society organizations may serve governance.

Table 1 also summarizes the percentage of sites providing interactive asynchronous information flow with regard to consultation stage. 7 out of 16 web sites do offer message boxes that enable users to send their comments and queries to mayors (43.7%). All of web sites include other boxes for citizen complaints and proposals. But, these boxes are not as impressive as direct e-mail because they don’t permit citizens to contact specific staff. In addition to this, many web sites present policy input (56.2%) and form submission (62.5%) opportunities to citizens via the Internet. However, it may not be easily regarded as an evidence of strong interaction between citizens and the government. Local governments aim to hear the voice of public. That’s all. Reacting is something else.

87.5% of web sites published adjudication announcements. Although it may be regarded as a transparency in local governments, it seems there are not any other transparency indicators such as declaring budgets online. Then, somewhat it is a matter of psychological obligation.
The low percentages of offering licences and allowances (6.2%), and guidance for companies (0.0%) are completely a result of weak interaction between local government and private sector. It proves the lack of governance one more time. It must be noted that only metropolitan municipality of Istanbul’s web site provides the citizens means to fill online licence and allowance forms.

25% of web sites offer several type of payments. Online payment service provision only includes the payments for i.e. water, sewerage system, and natural gas. Having no broad e-payment options probably depends on lack of security as a whole.

Indicators of Active Participation stage are composed of some additional elements. Synchronous interactive ICF includes chat rooms, discussions with mayor, and electronic town meetings indicator. All of the three are absent in municipality web sites. It must thus be concluded that Turkish metropolitan local governments have not been introduced with synchronous interactive ICF yet. It is understandable under the circumstances of strong state and weak society. Having had no tradition of such an information flow prevents both creating governance and its deliberation.

Generally speaking, asynchronous interactive ICF indicators that serve active participation model are low. For instance, number of e-mails (from citizens to webmaster) and e-voting are absent. Citizen centred government commands government to interact in different fields. E-voting is a method of active participation. In this case, the mayor and the council of mayor must prepare the policies and seek a feedback. E-voting may serve for this interaction. Lack of e-voting closes engagement door in the beginning of local decision-making process.

During our research we sent e-mails to webmasters in order to find out the number of e-mails and e-mail feedbacks they receive on a regular basis. 5 out of 16 responded our questions. According to their declarations, citizen sent e-mails changes from 10 to 100 a day. The questions are classified by webmasters and then directed to related services. They say that all questions are answered. It is clear that there is no statistics on the number of e-mails or subject of e-mails. As we mentioned before the e-mail feedback is not satisfactory. The number of e-mails is not provided on the web sites.

Another indicator of asynchronous interactive ICF is site search. 50% of web sites have site search feature. However, when we evaluate the percentage of site search and site map together, it seems difficult to find what citizens search.

It is because of the lack of staff commitment in regards with ICT that joining in the e-mail lists (18.7%) and online campaign (12.5%) features via the Internet are low. Also, level of putting e-petition into practice is low (18.7%).

Lastly we must note that, metropolitan municipalities’ web sites still have no actual information about budget execution.

### 6. Conclusion

The will of Turkey’s EU membership also leads to a substantial change in its logic of governing. In the past two decades there has been some remarkable transformation processes at work both in Turkish politics and governmental system. Not only in terms of technical aspects but also the logic is changing step by step. One of the basic improvements may be observed within the relationship between the state and citizens. A few decades ago ICTs have been accepted only so as to facilitate routine back office procedures. But in recent years, especially the Internet is assisting to this purpose. Regarding Turkish government’s ICT policy, local governments are adapting their own systems into the new order. In this new order, the Internet has become popular and functional as a tool. It is not only serving as a facilitator but also creating a new mode of engagement between the actors. The question here is, whether it is utilized to enable citizen engagement or not. Unfortunately, all the findings represented here shows that engagement or interaction level is very low. Turkish metropolitan municipalities largely use the Internet to supply specific information in different scopes (i.e. city information, media releases, publishing reports, documents for legal framework etc). In this context, the vast majority of online services of Turkish metropolitan municipalities are still at the first and second stage rather than active participation. Communication process predominantly operates one-way between actors. Consequently the way of communication as it stands may not open participation channels. Information flow not only occurs within a downward scope, but also upward and lateral observations are taken into consideration. There is evidence that, Turkish metropolitan municipalities have tendency to go through consultation stage. In consultation, there are several indicators that show the level of governance in terms of lateral ICF (i.e. links to administrative offices, links to CSOs, links to business sector, links to e-communities). All the percentages belonging to these indicators are not so high. Weak engagement refers to weak governance in the system.

Observed structure and pattern between information and consultation stages don’t adequately serve deliberation. But it is obvious that local governments are willing to establish a system that gives attention to deliberation. In Turkish case many local government web-sites are positively influenced by EU assistance and have demonstrated a stable improvement for the last five years. They gradually develop their initiatives in accordance
with e-Europe principals. The system of interaction seems to be a mixture of citizen centred and governmental needs oriented. All in all, however, it basically depends on the collaboration between EU and Turkey.

7. References


Other Internet Resources

**Turkish Metropolitan Municipalities Web Sites**

1- http://www.adana-bld.gov.tr
2- http://www.ankara.bel.tr
3- http://www.eskisehir-bld.gov.tr
4- http://www.gaziantep-bld.gov.tr
5- http://www.bursa-bld.gov.tr
6- http://www.ibb.gov.tr
7- http://www.izmir.bel.tr
8- http://www.kayseri.bel.tr
9- http://www.mersin.bel.tr
10- http://www.konya.bel.tr
11- http://www.samsun.bel.tr
12- http://www.kocaeli.bel.tr
13- http://www.antalya.bel.tr
14- http://www.erzurum-bld.gov.tr
15- http://www.diyarbakir.bel.tr
16- http://www.adapazari.bel.tr

**Other Related Web Sites**

http://www.bthaber.com
http://www.edevlet.net
http://www.turkiye.gov.tr
http://www.turkpoint.com
http://www.yerelnet.org.tr