E-Government Theory and Practice: The Evidence from Tennessee (USA)

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On April 30, 2004 a Google search for E-Government returned 2.8 million entries while a search with the keywords “Global Warming” brought back less than 700,000. The numeric difference may suggest that for Internet users E-Government, a subject that has to do with immediate issues of governance and provision of public services, is a more salient matter than our long-term survival on this planet. The general interest in E-Government is further illustrated by the third annual update on global e-government (West 2003) which monitors developments in the delivery of public information and government services through the Internet. Using a detailed analysis of 2,166 government websites in 198 different nations, the report measures the information and services that are available to the public online. The report (West 2003) charts the variations that exist across countries, and discusses how e-government sites vary by region of the world. In addition to that the report examines how the 2003 results compare to 2001 and 2002. According to the 2003 report on global E-Government (West 2003) some of the more important findings are the following items:

1) 16 percent of government websites offer services that are fully executable online, up from 12 percent in 2002.
2) 89 percent of websites provide access to publications and 73 percent have links to databases.
3) 12 percent (down from 14 percent in 2002) show privacy policies, while 6 percent (down from 9 percent in 2002) have security policies.
4) 14 percent of government websites have some form of disability access, meaning access for persons with disabilities.
5) English has become the most commonly used language of e-government. Seventy-four percent of national government websites have an English version.
6) 51 percent of sites are multilingual, meaning that they offer information in two or more languages.
7) Countries vary enormously in their overall e-government performance based on our analysis. The most highly ranked nations include Singapore, United States, Canada, Australia, Taiwan, Turkey, Great Britain, Malaysia, the Vatican, and Austria.

8) There are major differences in e-government performance based on region of the world. In general, countries in North America score the highest, followed by Asia, Western Europe, Pacific Ocean Islands, Middle East, Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia, South America, Central America, and Africa.

With this data in mind several important questions come to mind. Thus, for example, one must wonder whether the evolution of E-Government is the result of local circumstances or whether it is influenced or guided by a theory (or some alternative
theories). Also, given the efforts to rank E-government efforts one must ask whether there is an ideal model(s)? or, whether ranking is done on a curve, i.e., how good or how promising is the effort of one state in comparison to the efforts of other states. Are there too many cases where the strategy of developing E-Government is what Mintzberg (1987) calls an “emergent strategy” to denote the opposite of what he calls a “deliberate strategy” where intentions are stated clearly up front and realized in an exact manner? Every time one faces an E-Government effort that looks like it started as a random collection of activities, i.e., an emergent strategy, one must ask whether the time is right for drawing on the various experiences with E-Government to develop a theory or an ideal model? If, on the other hand, there is a theoretical body of knowledge and model(s) for guiding the development of E-Government one must question their instrumental value, if not their validity. By investigating why such theories or models fail to have a real influence on practice one can gain important insights not only into the theories or model in question but of the political economy of a given E-Government effort.

In this paper we cannot address these questions in depth. However, by looking in a critical way at the experience of one American state we hope to facilitate the discussion of these important questions. The State of Tennessee’s E-Government initiative, we assert, is a good case in point since it was ranked no. 1 in 2002 (West 2002) up from 35th place in 2000 (West 2000). Even though it went down to 4th place in 2003 (West 2003) it clearly remains one of the best efforts in the USA.

The press release for the June 9, 2003 E-Government symposium at the White House which was co-sponsored with OECD (2003) declared “E-government is more about government than about the e.” We see this declaration to be in line with an earlier assertion in the Economist (2000) declaring that:

[E-Government] will transform not only the way in which most public services are delivered, but also the fundamental relationship between government and citizen. Broadly, e-government involves the use of Internet based technologies to transact the business of government. At the level of service, e-government promises 24/7 convenience (full service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week), greater accessibility, the capacity to obtain government services without ever visiting a government office and reduced costs due to the increased technological intermediation. At the level of basic factors (government accountability and the general acceptance of state institutions), e-government contributes to the functioning of democracy by online provision of reports and other government information which would otherwise be difficult to obtain or unavailable, and through online debates and plebiscites. (cited by Teicher Hughes and Dow 2002:387)

A reality check seems to suggest that both declarations are more of a lips service to what is desired of E-Government than an accurate prediction, let alone a description, of current practices or theory. Pardo (2000) offers a more pragmatic approach for the study of what she calls “digital government.”
Government agencies must keep asking themselves three questions: What government business functions are we responsible for? How can we responsibly transform our current business models while incorporating new and emerging technologies? Are these new business models reflective of the collective concerns and priorities of the public; or do they threaten the public trust? As more and more agencies are delivering digital government services, clear types are emerging, and each type has its own array of policy, management, and technology implementation issues. By looking at each type, we are building an understanding of those that involve new ways of doing business such as integrating information in new ways and making it accessible over the Web, new ways of engaging in procurement and new ways to deliver services.

Jain (2004) reminds us that Kurt Lewin famously proclaimed, “There is nothing so practical as good theory”, signifying that a good theory lends itself to being applied in a variety of contexts. But where is the “grand” theory of E-Government?

According to Government Technology

Much of the interest in e-government is owed to the following theory: electronic government improves the "business of government" by creating more efficient and convenient constituent-to-government, business-to-government, and even government-to-government interaction. This is a powerful proposition for the government segment, which is often asked to do "more for less." Those jurisdictions that have begun to put this theory to the test have been pleased with the results (www.govtech.net/govcenter/solcenter/ezgov/index.phtml)

While the writers for Government Technology seems to make an accurate observation their use of the term "theory" leaves much to be desired. A World Bank publication declares: “there is no e-government textbook and no e-government theory; knowledge comes from practice; excellence comes from best practices” (World Bank 2002:2).

Given the amount of resources that have been committed so far by various governments for E-Government initiatives the lack of a guiding theory seems to be strange if not alarming. It is possible to think of several potential explanations. One of the more likely ones is the absence of a consensus about a common definition of E-Government. As would be explained and illustrated bellow there are many definitions for E-Government and the concept has different meanings.

Nevertheless, meta analysis of various reports of E-Government initiatives seems to offer some theoretical insights that eventually would be synthesized into one cohesive theory. Thus, for example Jain (2004:1) derive from the study of such reports two
interesting propositions: “The first theme that emerges is that IT (information technology) is a tool for 'reforming' bureaucracy. The second, somewhat contradictory, theme is that E-Government failure may be explained as a consequence of bureaucracy.” In the same vein it is possible to offer some other insights that can help us construct a theoretical framework for examining E-Government.

**E-Government: What’s in a definition**

According to a Star Project report (Evaluation and Benchmarking of E-Government: Status and Perspectives http://www.databank.it/star/list_issue/b_2.html) due to the relatively recent development of E-government it is particularly difficult to assume decisions and to shape the process of government adaptation to E-Government. In this regard, according to Star, one main difficulty that Public Administrators are facing is the lack of evidence about results and impacts, both during and after the implementation of E-government projects. This, the report claims, is partly due to the very nature of E-government, which reflects the volatility of technological developments. In addition, E-Government applications are typically cross-sector ones, complicating the task of disentangling their effects. As noted by several writers (Hazlett and Hill 2003, Buckle 2003), E-Government is heavily influenced by expectations of citizens to see public service rendered in the same fashion it is provided by so many entities in the private sector. Business organizations demands that government, one of their stakeholder, interface with them the same way they interface with other private sector organizations. Last, but not least, government agencies are under pressures from other government agencies to allow for electronic data interchanges (EDI) and other amenities that become possible with E-Government in order for them to realize productivity gains they promised when they invested in their own E-Government projects. Thus, for example, there are several instances where the development of E-Government at the State level in the USA was a reaction to earlier E-Government initiatives at the local level. In fact, in the case of Tennessee the E-Government effort of the State did not commence until the late 1990 while the metropolitan government of Nashville had its first Web site about then years earlier.

Moreover, the characteristics of the early stages of any E-Government initiative such as trial and error and experimentation with alternative modes of virtual provision of a given service may be the cause for some of the difficulties in assessing the success of such efforts. In particular it is hard to ascertain whether or not Public Administrators are guided by a specific vision of E-government.

Once articulated, such a vision can be operationalized by using one of generic models the information and communication technology (ICT). Some of these possible models are described by Digital Government (http://65.110.68.184/artman/publish/generic-models.shtml) and are listed below. These models, in turn, can be used as a guide in designing E-Government initiatives depending on the local situation and governance activities that are expected to be performed:
The Broadcasting Model: The model is based on dissemination / broadcasting of useful governance information which is in the public domain into the wider public domain through the use of ICT and convergent media.

The strength of the model rests upon the fact that a more informed citizenry is better able to judge the functioning of existing governance mechanisms and make an informed opinion about them. As a consequence, they become more empowered to exercise their Rights and Responsibilities.

The widespread application of this model corrects "information failure situations" by providing people with the relevant information relating to the governance sphere to make an informed opinion and impact governance processes.

Further, the use of ICT opens up an alternative channel for people to access information as well as validate existing information from different sources.

The Critical Flow Model: The model is based on disseminating/ channelizing information of critical value (which by its very nature would not be disclosed by those involved in bad governance) to the targeted audience (such as the media, opposition parties) or into the wider public domain through the use of ICT and convergent media. This model requires a foresight to:

- understand the "use value" of a particular information set,
- how to obtain such information,
- how it could be used strategically, and finally
- targeting it to users to whom the availability of such information would make a difference.

The strength of this model is that ICT makes the concept of 'distance' and 'time' redundant when information is hosted on a a digital network, and this could be used advantageously-- by instantly transferring the critical information to its strategic user group located anywhere or by making it freely available in the wider public domain.

Comparative Analysis Model: Comparative Knowledge Model may be one of the least-used but a highly significant model for developing countries The model can be used for empowering people by matching cases of bad governance with those of good governance, and then analyzing the different aspects of bad governance and its impact on the people.

The model is based on using ICT to explore information available in the public or private domain and comparing it with the known information sets. The outcome is strategic leanings and arguments, for instance, if a given amount of money can build '5' schools in village 'A' then why does the same amount of money build only '2' schools in village 'B'?

Essentially, the model continuously assimilates Best Practices in the areas of governance and then uses them as benchmark to evaluate other governance practices. It then uses the result to advocate positive changes or to influence 'public' opinion on these governance practices. The comparison could be made over a time scale to get a snapshot
of the past and present situation or could be used to compare the effectiveness of an intervention by comparing two similar situations.

The strength of this model lies in the infinite capacity of digital networks to store varied information and retrieve and transmit it instantly across all geographical and hierarchal barriers.

**E-Advocacy / Mobilization and Lobbying Model** is one of the most frequently used Digital Governance model and has often come to the aid of the global civil society to impact on global decision-making processes.

The model is based on setting-up a planned, directed flow of information to build strong virtual allies to complement actions in the real world. Virtual communities are formed which share similar values and concerns, and these communities in turn link up with or support real-life groups/ activities for concerted action. The model builds the momentum of real-world processes by adding the opinions and concerns expressed by virtual communities.

The strength of this model is in its diversity of the virtual community, and the ideas, expertise and resources accumulated through this virtual form of networking. The model is able to mobilize and leverage human resources and information beyond geographical, institutional and bureaucratic barriers, and use it for concerted action.

**Interactive-Service model:** is a consolidation of the earlier presented digital governance models and opens up avenues for direct participation of individuals in the governance processes. Fundamentally, ICT have the potential to bring in every individual in a digital network and enable interactive (two-way) flow of information among them. The potential of ICT for the governance is fully leveraged in this model and leads and can bring lead to greater objectivity and transparency in decision-making processes.

Under this model, the various services offered by the Government become directly available to its citizens in an interactive manner. It does so by opening up an interactive Government to Consumer to Government (G2C2G) channel in various aspects of governance, such as election of government officials (e-ballots); redressing online of specific grievances; sharing of concerns and providing expertise; opinion polls on various issues etc.

Though such models can assist the planning of E-Government initiatives in hindsight it is not always clear, what if any, theory, model or vision was followed. Was a given blue print the result of a careful analysis that showed it to be the most promising one, albeit on paper, for serving the public’s needs? Or, whether the involved Administrators embracing the most “convenient process” for introducing E-government? Were blue prints for E-Government developed to address the most salient issues from the public’s perspective or in a way that optimizes the use of resources? Or, was symbolism and expectation of a political bonanza foremost guiding force in selecting the “promising
“design”? In other words, in hindsight it is not always easy to establish where do a given government stands on the continuum between being proactive or reactive when it comes to E-Government. Thus, the Star report is correct in asserting that the very nature and the present stage of E-Government seem to result in the lack of adequate evaluation tools. While this assertion is accurate it seems that there might be some other, and maybe, more important reasons for the difficult in assessing E-Government initiatives. One of the other possible reasons for this difficulties is the lack of a generally accepted theory or model of E-Government.

The current confusion about what is the precise meaning of E-Government is reflected in the numerous, divers and overlapping definitions of the term E-Government and its primary purpose or justification. The American E-Government Act that was signed into law in 2002, for example, states its purpose in the following way (emphasis added): “To enhance the management and promotion of electronic Government services and processes by establishing a Federal Chief Information Officer within the Office of Management and Budget, and by establishing a broad framework of measures that require using Internet-based information technology to enhance citizen access to Government information and services, and for other purposes” (H.R. 2458 http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d107:HR02458:|TOM:/bss/d107query.html)

Here are some other examples (emphasis added):

"The use of information and communication technologies, and particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government." OECD’s E-Government Imperative (2003)

“E-government is the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by government agencies. Its use promises to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of government and alter its relationship with the public.” UNDP (2001)

E-GOVERNMENT http://www.surf-as.org/Papers/e-gov-english.PDF

E-Government refers to the use of information and communications technologies to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of government. (World Bank) (http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/egov/)

"E-government refers to the delivery of government information and services online through the Internet or other digital means." (West 2001)


"E-government links people...to the public marketplace of ideas, debate, priorities, initiatives, innovation, services, transactions, and results. It puts ownership of government truly in the hands of all Americans." (Council for Excellence in Government 2001)

"Digital (electronic) government is about transforming government service delivery through the use of technology." (Parado 2000)

E-government can be defined as the **delivery of public information**, goods and services through the use of technology. (Stiedel n.d.)

http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itdhr/1003/ijd/crouch.htm

E-Government is defined as the use of information and communications technologies to **improve the functioning of government.** (Jain 2004)

By e-government we mean the **application** of information and communications technologies (ICT) to the organisation and operation of government. Teicher, Hughes and Dow (2002:384)

While these and other definitions suggest the existence of a wide spectrum of opinions and perspectives about E-Government there seem to be some recurring themes which can be referred to as the facets of E-Government. By fact we mean perspective, reason, justification or purpose. It seems that at different times various levels of government may opt to emphasis one facet or several facets over the others. The various facets are not independent of each other. In fact, they are overlapping and are expected to enhance different, but equally, important values by enhancing or facilitating productivity gains. Understanding that governments are within their rights when they emphasis one facet over another implies that using “universal” assessment tools that measure attributes such as “citizen centered” may results in skewed, unreliable and unfair evaluation of the effort under study.

The tendency to commit such a conceptual error in evaluating E-Government efforts seems to be common. In our survey of E-government and E-commerce in Tennessee we found that agencies do not make any effort to differentiate between the two. Some areas that are considered by agencies as part of the E-government development effort such as electronic data interchange (EDI) are in fact E-commerce like activities. For our purposes here E-Government seems to include facets such as:

*Inter-agency operations: For example: change in the ownership registration of a vehicle triggers a demand by another unit within the agency for the tax owed to the state as a result of the transaction of selling/buying a car.

*Intra-agency operations: For example, the Tennessee Department of Safety (which issue driver licenses) is notified by local Police or Sheriff Departments that a driver failed to show proof of insurance as required by law and start acting on it. At the Federal level in the USA the E-government initiative resulted in the following efficiencies: E-Payroll, through the efforts of multi-agency teams a migration of agencies from 22 providers to 2
payroll partnerships, with a projected lifecycle cost savings of $995 million. Another example is the Integrated Acquisition Environment which has resulted in an agency-shareable single vendor-performance file. (President’s E-Government Initiative, http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/egov/internal.htm)

*Intergovernmental operations and G2G: For example: notifying the Selected Service Board, a Federal agency, about each young man that gets his first driver license which is issued by the State. Obtaining the driver license in Tennessee became, in fact, the act of registering with the Board as required by law.

*G2B/B2G: Government to Business and Business to Government were the first areas where government agencies where trying to take advantage of the Internet adopting common practices from the private sector (B2B). Here state agencies use the Internet to seek bids in connection with agencies effort to sell or buy goods and services, announce change in existing regulations or to post and explain new ones. Businesses use the Internet to make payments, renew licenses and permits, request information or the forms they need for complying with various laws etc.

*G2C/C2G: For example, notification of property tax assessments, approaching expiration of permits and licenses, change of zoning hearings, minutes of meetings, etc. Citizens use the Internet to renew driver licenses, notify various agencies about change of address, request assistance or certain services (e.g., building code inspection) or to obtain public health related information

*E-Democracy (E-Participation) and accountability: This include the posting of minutes, audit and year end reports, budgets, court decisions, etc. in a way that allows for exchanges and dialogues among readers and between a reader and the posting agency. While on its face this facet represent the epitome of the new way to realize the values of democracy by encouraging informed participation.

* E- Public Relations: In reality it’s the one facet that is embraced as a priority at all levels of government. In the name of any of the other facets and in particular in the name of E-Democracy and accountability government officials and agencies list their alleged achievements as undisputed evidence of their commitment to democracy, public service and prudent use of taxes. As illustrated by President Bush’s E-Government Web Site (http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/egov/index2.html) and the corresponding pages of Governors and Mayors from all over America a web site is first of all an electronic billboard. In most cases before a government web site explains to an Internet surfing citizen its possible use for interfacing with government the whole idea of E-Government is saliently presented and its cost is justified as an effort to enhance government transparency and as a more prudent approach for efficient provision of services. Government web sites are also the place for the spin-job that turns inexcusable failures or minor achievements into great success stories. Messages from and self aggrandizing periodic reports of elected and appointed officials are prominently embedded in the Web sites of agencies (as different from these officials own Web sites).
Display of such “propaganda” seem to be a priority consideration in the design of government web sites.

Yu-che Chen and James Perry (2003) imply an inside-out perspective when they assert that “electronic government (e-government) is at the forefront of government efforts to provide information and services to citizens, businesses, government employees, other governmental units, and third sector organizations. However, is it really the case? Are most E-Government initiatives conceived and developed to help those outside any given agency or are the needs of the involved agency the prime consideration?

According to Steidel (2003) The challenge for state and local governments rests with promoting services that are available and making citizens aware of them. That sound more like a possible survival strategy for government agencies than an effort to cater to the needs of those outside it as asserted by Chen and Perry (2003). Steidel cites a survey by the Council for Excellence in Government where only 34 percent of the public indicated that they were somewhat aware of the specific e-government services available to them. The only way to improve the effectiveness of e-government resources, she claims, is to make the public aware of what such services can do. Against this background it is possible to see that it may be possible to derive the extent that a government is serious about optimizing each of the E-Government facets listed above from assessment of the efforts to enhance public awareness of E-Government. In Tennessee we have seen more reports about alleged savings (e.g., lower cost of renewing a driver license) or better revenues (e.g., as a result of replacing the actual local auction of Metro surplus goods with a virtual one on the Internet) than evaluation of how effective is government in advertising what is available on E-Government. This may suggest that the E-Government effort in Tennessee may correspond mostly with the E-PR facet as described above than any of the other than the other facets. This claim would become clearer following the critical discussion that is offered bellow.
E-Government In Tennessee: A Critical Review

West (2004:15) reminds us that when we study the affect of new technology we need to differentiate between “long term versus short term impact, big versus little shifts, and technocratic versus political and institutional alteration” West (2004) asserts that because it is hard to predict whether a technological innovation would result eventually in a large scale or a small scale change it make sense to study such innovations in the short run. Thus, West (2004:16) concludes that “the virtue of studying short term changes is that it provides hints about long term shifts.” Following this advise we took a snap shot of Tennessee’s E-Government effort for the purpose of finding out which of the facets listed above can explain it best. Using the analogy to Factor Analysis it is asserted that identifying any single facet as a high load factor at the present (or immediate past) can be a good predictor for the likely future direction of the E-Government effort. By comparing the data that is captured by such snap shots at two points of time it is possible to ascertain whether the same facet remained the “high load factor” or whether it was replaced by another facet(s). A finding that indeed another facet(s) became the “high load factor” may indicate, in turn, a change of vision or strategy under the best of circumstances and utter confusion, lack of leadership and lack of a unified direction or goal under the worst possible scenario.

The State Legislature in Tennessee does not have its own independent research office. Thus, we are going to start this critical review of the Tennessee experience to date by reference to the research findings from another state because they may shed light on some problematic issues in Tennessee. In California the Legislative Analyst's Office issued in January 2001 a report raising concerns about the State E-Government initiatives and articulating possible considerations for assessing E-Government. The report states:

**Concerns with Current State Direction.** We raise a number of concerns about the direction that the state is taking with respect to e-government, specifically, the lack of (1) public input in determining the services to be provided through this initiative, (2) information on the administration's priorities for this initiative, and (3) executive-level sponsorship from the state's program areas whose services are to be provided through e-government. (Legislative Analyst's Office 2001)

Though the said report is from California, the observations that are the basis for that State’s Legislative Analysts’ Office seems to be in line with our own observations in Tennessee. In particular we were amazed to find out that there was no planned effort to find where the shoe hurts before lunching many of the initiatives. E-Government initiatives in Tennessee have been presented as being an effort to make State government more responsive to public demands, i.e., a multi-facet approach which involves E-Participation and E-Democracy, G2C/C2G, G2B/B2G, and improving the efficiency of Inter-agency operations. However, there have been no public hearings and no attempt to
survey the public or businesses about the areas that should get priority in developing E-Government applications.

Using the facets we defined above the motivation in many cases seems to have been the E-Public Relations even though the marketing and legitimization of the efforts (i.e., the demands for resources) was done by using the rhetoric that is common to the other facets. Thus for example, the renewal of driver’s licenses on line was introduced with great fan fare televising the Governor trying to renew his own (which he was not able to complete due to a computer glitch). The State was also quick to report that in 2003 out of the more than 4 million Tennesseans with a valid driver license 215,000 citizens were using the internet for driver license services. This figure represented an increase of 164% over the number of drivers using the on-line option in the first year. Though the majority of Tennesseans still renew it the old fashion way the State was also quick to report an alleged saving in operational cost. According to State officials license renewal (or change of address) on line cost the State $2.50 in comparison to the cost of $9.00 for manual renewal. This is a savings of $6.50 per transaction. With the seven thousand transactions which took place on line in February 2004 E-Government resulted in a savings of $45,500 for the State according to an interview with Lou Kompare, Deputy Chief Information Officer for Tennessee. Needless to say that the said reports about the alleged savings with on-line renewal of driver licenses is based on the variable cost of a transaction and does not factor in the start up cost and the fixed cost of having this option on line. The report also does not explain why certain age groups seems to be more likely and why some are less likely to use the on-line service. Specifically the state reports that individuals between the ages of 30 to 49 used the site the most at 29%. Those between the ages of 40 to 49 used the site 25% and those between the ages of 20 to 29 were very close at 22%. The fact that individuals over 60 years of age (who are exempt from having a picture on their driver license) are less likely to use the service on line suggests that those who were most likely to benefit from the service do not find it useful. The state has no good explanation for the variable level of usage where some remote locations registered with higher level of use than large university-based-cities like Knoxville or Memphis where computer literacy is high and access to the Internet is easy.

Users of the service seem to be satisfied with the new option for renewing their driver license on line. However this interaction with State government takes place only once every four years and there is no data to indicate that such an improvement was a priority for the public at large or even for those who use the on-line renewal option.

As for the Administration’s priorities for E-Government in Tennessee, the guiding principle seems to be the good old rule of thumb: “don’t make waves.” Areas for possible E-Government initiatives are those where little controversy can be anticipated or where no new legislation is required. This posture is consistent with the observations that are offered by West (2004) about the possible reasons why technological innovations tend to be of an incremental nature (Lindblom 1968). Though it is not admitted by state officials the strategy for developing E-Government in Tennessee seems to be (with few exceptions!) The imitation of successful initiatives from other states. This strategy
reduces the risk of any political liability due to an IT failure while maximizing the PR value of “we are there with the best of them”

According to the 2004 IT strategic plan for Tennessee (TN 2004) the first goal of the e-government effort is “assist leadership in developing and implementing enterprise strategies for solving complex business problems: i.e., core infrastructure business systems, application integration, consolidated state network.” The various activities listed under this goal are an effort to address reengineering and efficiency issues within State government. The saliency of this goal is not a result of the State leadership to improve productivity. Rather, it is an attempt by the State to address the consequences of a budget crisis over several years. Hence the drive to do more with less represents a reality where new resources cannot be mobilized and the only way to address various operational challenges is to find more efficient ways to carry out the business of the State in the hope of freeing some resources. Since in the last two years “savings” have been generated by elimination of positions finding new and better uses of IT became the only hope for avoiding the political consequences from further deterioration of public service.

The second goal of the plan is to revolutionize government service delivery through innovation in the use of technology to produce efficiencies, reduce costs, and improve responsiveness and customer convenience. This goal is consistent with many writings (Teicher, Hughes and Dow 2002, Stamoulis et al 2001) who proclaim that one purpose of e-government is to provide the citizen with seamless interface with government leading to greater convenience for service recipient on the one hand and greater efficiency for government. Examining the services offered by e-government in Tennessee such aspirations are part of the e-pr but not part of reality.

The third goal of the 2004 strategic plan is to ensure that “state data and IT resources are protected from threats and vulnerabilities in an IT infrastructure that attains the highest level of reliability and availability”. Though advertised as an effort by the state to address issues of privacy the reading of the proposed activities planned for attaining this goal suggest otherwise. Objective 3.1, for example, calls for “support [of] vertical and horizontal communications for public and private sector information sharing to serve the goals of homeland security.” This goal may be in line with the Intra-agency or Intergovernmental relation facets identified above but in reality any resulting safeguards of privacy are going to be secondary in nature.

Goal number 4 is the one dealing with e-government. According to the 2004 IT strategic plan of Tennessee the aim is “[to] provide citizens access to reliable and responsive services and information electronically: government available anytime - from anywhere.” The activities listed under this goal include items such as “Develop and promote the “one-stop shop/single entry” interface to electronic government services.” “Encourage and support the integration of customer services across departmental boundaries and the various levels of government for the benefit of our customers.” or “Ensure accessibility of e-government services to all citizens of the state.” However state officials did not want to go on records with the specifics in terms of the actual intended results, e.g., when could citizens or any business entity change an address as they deal
with one state agency knowing that their records at all other state agencies would reflect the said change would take place without additional action on their part. In our cursory survey of an unscientific sample of students such a convenience ranked very high.

Who can argue that such noble goals are without merit? On face value one might think that Tennessee compiled a very promising strategic plan for developing its IT and E-Government capacity. However, as pointed out earlier a closer scrutiny may suggest otherwise. Specifically:

- The plan does not provide the road map nor does it a seamless service. For the lay person that means that changing an address on the Driver License would not generate a desired automatic update of one’s mailing address with other State agencies.
- The plan does not provide a meaningful way for taxpayers to influence priorities for making various government services available on line.
- The plan does not seem to be derived from agencies strategic plan. In other words, under current conditions agencies are expected to incorporate into their own strategic planning as a “given” the State’s IT Strategic Plan even though the latter one is supposed to facilitate efforts to carry out each agency’s mission.
- The plan does not provide for a concentrated effort to educate taxpayers about the availability and benefits of using services on line.
- The plan does not provide the specific means nor a clear strategy for developing a virtual polity. Lacking discussion or chat rooms which are sponsored and maintained by the State citizens can exchange opinions among themselves only by using commercial services like those offered by AOL.
- The plan does not provide for a two way interaction between citizens and elected officials or key administrators.
- The plan does not seem to be consistent with any of the generic governance models described above.
- The plan does not seem to be guided by any clear criterion and does not fully correspond to any of the facets listed above.

Concluding Remarks

What can we learn from the study of the E-Government effort in Tennessee? We expected to find out that such an effort is guided by some theory or model or at least that in hindsight it seems to correspond to one. We were wrong. We expected to find changes in the pattern of budget allocations with more money going to IT and less money going for personnel. As it turns out, trimming of the payroll was a result of budget crunch for several years in a row. It was not that after E-Government was introduced some positions became redundant. If fact, low utilization of State services on line have yet to generate such savings when it comes to human resources. The growing allocations
for IT are the result of several factors. First of all low allocations in the past forced the State to set aside more resources for IT in order to keep its IT ranking by outsiders. Such ranking is important politically for elected officials and economically as an inducements to potential investors. Second, due the sharp trimming of personnel it became a must in some agencies to resort to IT in order to replace the operational capacity that was lost due to elimination of positions. Under normal circumstances the savings that are generated due to the higher efficiency that results from the introduction of IT allow agencies to trim their payroll. In Tennessee, trimming of the payroll preceded and triggered the search for IT solutions in order to prevent total erosion of service quality. Burn and Robins (2003:25) notes that “e-government requires major business process change.” Given the budget wars in the State Legislature that preceded his election the Governor of Tennessee was never in a position to suggest any serious effort of reengineering. Thus the E-Government efforts of the state did not involve and did not result in any of the organizational or institutional changes as asserted by Fountain (2001). E-Government in Tennessee seems to have contributed to faster filing and moving of information, extension of service hours and place of service. However, it came short of being the impetus for administrative reform either in the name of better public productivity or for the sake of more accountability, transparency or public participation.
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