

## Panel 5: Governance in the Information Age

Chaired by: Stefan Soeparman (Tilburg University), Stephan Grimmelikhuisen (Utrecht University) and Guido van Os (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

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We are moving to an “information age government”. This kind of phrase is quite common in political rhetoric (Starr, 2010). Moreover, technology has always been trumpeted by politicians as some kind of panacea for all that dysfunctions in the public sector (accountability, corruption, inefficiency, compartmentalization etc). For example, US president Barack Obama put ICTs high on the political agenda: technology should play a major in making government more transparent, which is beneficial for restoring citizen trust in government (Coglianese, 2009).

But has the information age – the dissemination of ICTs into every part of society – fundamentally altered government and governance? And has this changed the way people view it? Especially with regard to ICTs and government (e-government) hypes come and go (for instance, personalized service delivery, integrated service delivery, e-voting etc.) but what really takes root in the daily practices of government is fairly unknown.<sup>1</sup> And are these practices really different? Are ICTs really contributing to a more transparent and efficient government apparatus? These are lasting and ever returning questions. The “ICT and governance” panel now exists for many years and has always tried to critically examine the risks and opportunities of newest technologies on government (web 2.0, mobile government). Contrariwise the ‘real’ effects of ICTs ‘after the hype’ are investigated as well: does e-government fundamentally change anything (websites etc.)?

In order to develop these explanations to these grand research questions, we would like to use the NIG annual conference to gain insights on how ICT-systems in the public sphere are governed, used and what their effect is on citizens and the public sector. In this respect, we treat ICTs as independent, as well as a dependent variable; we are concerned not only with how it affects government and citizens, but we are also concerned with how it is developed.

### Linkage with the NIG-research programme

The proposed research theme relates to the first and third subtheme of the NIG research programme. With regard to public management in a joined-up world, it is claimed that ICTs can potentially contribute to joining up government; in this session, however, we would like to gain insight whether this actually is the case. Secondly, our panel clearly relates to citizens and governance, the third aspect of the NIG research programme. We would like to investigate into the role of citizens with regard to the development and use of ICTs, and we focus on implications of this for governance.

### Papers, Invitations and Schedule

We invited authors to write papers that focus on how governance of ICTs actually takes place. Papers could have addressed both development and effects of ICTs, but also address other themes. Anyone interested in participation was requested to submit an abstract of ½ page on a topic related to the panel’s main themes. Authors are expected to follow NIG-deadlines.

The chairs hoped that the open and encouraging atmosphere of the previous meetings also characterized the 2010 meeting. Therefore, we stressed that contributors should not shy away from sending in ‘work in progress’. Finally, we liked to enable discussion and research between researchers from different disciplines; academics with a technological background are therefore invited as well.

Papers with the following themes in particular, but not exclusively, were invited to send in an abstract:

- Research on the effects of ICTs and e-government in the public sector
- Research on the management of ICT (projects) in the public sector
- Conceptual papers about e-government and related concepts
- Papers exploring concepts related to ICTs and government (privacy etc)

<sup>1</sup> A good attempt in investigating hypes is the edited volume by Meijer, Boersma and Wagenaar (2009).

## References

Starr, P., 2010, Commentary: The Liberal State in a Digital World, *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, 23(1), 1-6.

Coglianesi, C., 2009, The Transparency President? The Obama Administration and Open Government, *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, 22(4), 529-544.

Meijer, A., Boersma K. and P. Wagenaar, 2009, *ICTs, Citizens and Governance: After the Hype!*, Amsterdam: IOS Press