Beyond ubiquity: Mobile government, theory and practice

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2012-06-13 - Submitted for presentation at the 2012 spring KAPA conference at Seoul National University
Introduction

In the next decade, a majority of human beings will access the internet for the first time on a handheld device, and by 2018, global mobile phone penetration is expected to be almost equal to the number of inhabitants on the globe (OECD & International Telecommunication Union 2011). As such, an immense opportunity exists for governments in both developed and developing countries to utilize these new devices in order to provide enhanced and expanded services to mobile citizens via ubiquitous wireless networks. As of yet, however, relatively little scholarship has been devoted to the study of how these new mobile technologies have unfolded and how they are affecting communication between citizens and government and effecting service delivery. As the massive realignment of technology provides an opportunity to redefine our citizen engagement strategies and attain higher performance at a lower cost, it is important to understand how a transition from personal computer-based e-government to service delivery via the next generation of electronic devices will impact the process of governing. These are relevant and urgent questions considering the already significant and growing expenditure on public sector information technology systems, which are as high at 1.5% of GDP in developed countries (Dunleavy et al. 2006, pg. 1) as well as the rapidly changing nature of the technology available. We need to have a more detailed blueprint about what the future of e-government will look like.

In the first we explore the case of mobile government rollout in South Korea and particularly Seoul city with the intention of evaluating the existing e-government development frameworks against the reality of mobile government as currently implemented. South Korea currently ranks first among world countries on both the United Nations e-government and e-participation index (UN 2012), and in the recent past has begin to extend e-government strategies to the mobile space, making it an ideal place to carry out mobile government research. However, given that