Chapter 8
Sources of Legitimacy for the M-Government Initiatives in Turkey: Human vs. Technical Resource Management Concerns

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ABSTRACT

Emerging markets have recently been experiencing a dramatic increase in the number of mobile phones per capita. M-government has, hence, been heralded as an opportunity to leap-frog the technology cycle and provide cheaper and more inclusive services to all. This chapter explores, within an emerging market context, the legitimacy and resistance facing civil servants’ engagement in m-government activities and the direct implication for resource management. Thirty in-depth interviews with key ICT civil servants in local organizations in Turkey, are drawn-upon to assess the impact of m-government activities. The findings show that three types of resources are perceived as central namely: (i) diffusion of information management, (ii) operating system resource management and (iii) human resource management. The main evidence suggests that legitimacy for each resource management, at local level, is an ongoing struggle where all groups deploy multiple forms of resistance. Overall, greater attention in the resource management strategy for m-government application needs to be devoted to enablers such as civil servants rather than the final consumers or citizens.

INTRODUCTION

Mobile government (m-government hereafter) has been heralded as an imperative for administrative processes’ modernization in emerging countries (Kushchu, 2007). Although several m-government services are already available in emerging markets, provided by both private and public organizations, little is known about the formative
stages and the legitimacy/resistance (positive and negative) civil servants are encountering in their everyday activities, from a resource management perspective, in order to implement m-government applications and strategies (Abanumy & Mayhew, 2005; Ghyasi & Kushchu, 2004; Sundar & Garg, 2005; Tozsa & Budai, 2005; Prins, 2001). In this chapter, m-government is defined as the development of new technologies, applications and services in order to create an “able society” (Kushchu, 2007). Digital technologies as resource management tools used in public administration have contributed to an improved understanding of many aspects of everyday practices, especially at local level, including digital strategies (Kahraman et al., 2007; Ferguson, 2001), impact of e-culture on e-governments (Hazlett & Hill, 2003), m-government policy issues (Yildiz, 2007; Lam, 2005), service architecture (Sharma & Gupta, 2004; Abramowicz et al., 2006), e-governance (Saxena, 2005; Stahl, 2005; Holliday & Kwok, 2004) and e-government models (Heeks, 2002).

Consecutively, mobile technologies have attracted interdisciplinary interest centered around three main areas: domestication (Goggin, 2008; Weilenmann, 2001); mobile technology and user practices (Fortunati et al., 2003; Katz, 2003); and, at a societal level, adoption with engagement in wider spheres including politics and social policies (Brown et al., 2002; Rheingold, 2002). Further related aspects include status symbols (Dedeoglu, 2004; Ozcan & Kocak, 2003), MMS/SMS social and pragmatic aspects (Chapman & Schofield, 1998; Lin & Tong, 2008; Rettie, 2007; Sharma & Sturges, 2007), networked society (Ling, 2004, Goggin, 2008), mobile devices as fashion items (Katz & Sugiyama, 2006; Hulme & Peters, 2003) and m-entertainment (Ha et al., 2007; Harmer, 2003; Pagani, 2004).

The negative aspects of mobile technologies have also been studied including issues relating to health (Foster & Moulder, 2000), addiction (Bianchi & Phillips, 2005), lack of concentration while driving or multitasking (Esbjornsson et al., 2007), increased reaction time, psychological impact of mobile consumption on children and adolescents (Döring & Gundolf, 2005) and miss-appreciation of cognitive and/or physical demand while multitasking (Goodman et al., 1999; McEvoy et al., 2005).

Based on the above characteristics, three partial gaps have been identified from the literature. First, few, if any, studies have been conducted in the context of the public services and the role of m-services. Second, most studies examining digital resource management strategies have usually been conducted at macro level rather than at local level. Third, published work on digital resource management strategy has almost exclusively focused on the so-called ‘first tier’ countries, with concentration on the central North American and European perspectives. Examples of the ‘second tier’ or peripheral regions of Europe such as Turkey are limited.

This book chapter presents the findings of a total of 30 phone interviews which were conducted with the key civil servants working within local government organizations in Turkey during the introduction of the first concrete m-government strategy in 2008-2009. This key period coincides with the recent transition and creation of the central e-government platform, which was launched only few months before in December 2008, in order to centralize the digital government strategy.

While the e-government activities have yet to be fully understood and implemented by all local organizations, deeper technological transitions...
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