Chapter 15
The Role of Local Agencies in Developing Community Participation in E–Government and E–Public Services

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the way in which understanding of participation in e-services has evolved through a social learning process within planning and implementation processes. The chapter traces the development of methodologies, partnerships and design constituencies in pilot projects that inform the development of inclusive e-services. It draws on case studies of e-services between 1995 and 2009 to show how planning processes become embedded in cycles of learning and development. E-services involve change in services as well socio-technological change and relate to change in forms of participation. This has led to the development of partnerships to plan and implement e-services and to the development of research and design methodologies that foster participation in the design and use of e-services.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to discuss how local agencies found that they had to create partnership approaches and experiment with research and design methodologies in the planning and design of e-services. The design and planning of e-services involves both technological and organizational change, which has resulted in local service providers forming partnerships to plan and implement e-services. The development of e-services raises issues beyond technological and organizational change to the consideration of how people participate in the design and use of new services. Those involved in the planning of e-services have had to adapt to address these issues. This has led to the development of partnerships to plan and implement e-government and e-services and adaptations of participatory approaches in designing e-services. The structure of the chapter is: first the background to e-services is discussed; then the issues of design and partnerships are considered. This is followed by a section exploring the rethinking of participation before an outline of the methods employed in the case stud-
ies. The case studies are then described. This is then followed by a discussion of solutions and recommendations as well as an identification of future trends before the conclusion of the chapter.

**BACKGROUND: E-SERVICES**

The development and use of information and communication technologies (ICT) by the public sector is seen in the domains of e-government and public sector e-services. The aim of developing e-services goes beyond e-enabling existing services in that governments and administrations seek to modernize services, for example, the eGovernment programme in England (2002) sought to:

1. Transform services by making them more accessible, more convenient, more responsive and more cost-effective.
2. Renew local democracy by making councils more open, more accountable, more inclusive and better able to lead their communities.

The above outline encompasses many of the themes in the development of e-services more generally. The figure below gives a schematic overview of the themes of e-services.

These themes illustrate the ways in which e-services revolve around potential benefits that can be gained through accessible and improved participation in services. For instance, if services are more convenient to use with feedback loops then service provision can be more responsive and cost effective. By transforming services in this way, the accessibility, convenience and resulting responsiveness can be harnessed to efforts to renew local democratic processes creating a more open and accountable approach to service provision through improved communication and access to local politicians (Dunleavy et al. 2002). By developing e-services Local Authorities and their partnerships contribute to regional strategies that seek to build ICT infrastructure and skills base within regional economic plans (Wessels, 2008b).