Chapter 13
E-Participation and Citizen Relationship Management in Urban Governance: Tools and Methods

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ABSTRACT
Citizen relationship management (CiRM) is a combination of management approaches and information technologies for improving citizen services and citizen participation used at all levels of government. As an adaptation of private sector customer relationship management (CRM), CiRM is experiencing significant public sector adoption rates globally. However, while private sector CRM has demonstrated significant impact in the private sector, CiRM benefits are limited, and particularly lagging in the area of citizen e-participation in urban governance. This chapter provides an overview of the scope of CiRM functionality, with particular regard to the CRM origins and CiRM extensibilities, to develop a broader perspective of CiRM’s capacity for addressing e-participation. Developing this perspective further, theoretical and methodological approaches to e-participation are presented and evaluated in four categories: generic CiRM participation models, e-government CiRM, democratic CiRM, and strategic CiRM. Further research opportunities are highlighted within the context of emerging organizational, technological, and societal trends.

INTRODUCTION
Citizen relationship management (CiRM) is a collection of management methods and information technologies used by governments to interact effectively with citizens (Schellong, 2008). CiRM evolved from commercial customer relationship management (CRM) technologies, and is most commonly used by municipalities as a set of information technology tools and processes to answer citizen phone enquiries, route email requests, provide information via website, and process online transactions. Increasingly, CiRM is also being used to facilitate and manage citizen online participation, or e-participation, in a variety of forms, with the potential to substantially improve
how citizens participate in civic affairs and how
governments utilize citizens’ inputs (Chang &

CiRM technologies are widely used to improve
citizen service levels by, for example, accepting
citizen enquiries and routing them to the appro-
priate department. This chapter discusses most
common CiRM implementations that include
citizen relationship tools and methods such as
911 and 311 response systems, online transac-
tion and bill payment, information delivery and
discussion portals, volunteer management, and
call centre applications, among others, typically
categorized as e-government CiRM. Citizen ser-
vice representatives use CiRM systems to track
citizen enquiries, record details of telephone con-
versations and outcomes throughout the steps of
each enquiry, and finally note the resolution and
citizen satisfaction level achieved. An underlying
purpose of e-government CiRM is to enhance
citizen participation through the use of Internet
technologies, or e-participation. This chapter
also explores other approaches to e-participation
through CiRM, including several democratic and
strategic approaches.

The theoretical underpinnings for CiRM-based
e-participation draw from democratic governance
and citizen participation, as well as organizational
teachure, strategy and processes. An important perspective of e-participation is the
relationship between government and citizens,
particularly the communication patterns and trans-
actions that form the relationship. These theories
are examined in this chapter as they pertain to each
of the CiRM approaches discussed.

Finally, CiRM increasingly plays a central role
in developing citizen relationships. In business,
CRM (customer relationship management) is
used to track and analyse customer interactions to
learn how to relate more effectively with custom-
ers, thereby understanding how to provide more
desirable products and services, and increasing
the company’s value (King, 2007; Souder, 2001).
Similarly, governments use CiRM to relate more
effectively with citizens, for transparency and
accountability (Castells & Cardoso, 2006), and
to analyse what services are valued and how citi-
zens would like them improved, and further, how
citizens envision the future of their communities
(Lorinc, 2006).

This chapter examines citizen-government
relationships in view of democratic governance,
and how e-participation is impacting those rela-
tionships in theory and in practice through CiRM
tools and methods.

BACKGROUND

CiRM is described as a strategy that enables a
technological focus on citizens’ needs and en-
courages citizen participation (Reddick, 2010).
Giving meaning to such a broad definition requires
an examination of the background of CiRM,
particularly its origins and growth in the private
sector. To be clear, this chapter shall consistently
distinguish between CRM as private sector cus-
tomer relationship management and CiRM as
public sector citizen relationship management,
and CRM/CiRM where concepts apply equally
to both private and public sector. Although CRM
is now a powerful tool in business, it has taken a
decade of trial and error to realize CRM’s poten-
tial. Government has not yet arrived at a strategic
understanding of how to apply CiRM effectively
and maximize citizen participation. Therefore an
examination of CRM is appropriate and necessary
to developing a more complete understanding of
the power, potential, and pitfalls of CiRM. This
examination will include an overview of CRM
as a strategy and management approach, CRM
technological extensibility, and current trends that
are significantly broadening CRM applicability
in the private sector including cloud services, the
expanding CRM ecosystem, and social CRM.
This overview of CRM will form the basis for
the examination of CiRM applications and e-
participation capabilities.