TRANSPARENT AND OPEN GOVERNANCE: WEB CONTENT ANALYSIS OF METROPOLITAN INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENTS INFORMATION AT LOCAL LEVEL – A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FOUR METROPOLITAN CITIES OF SOUTH AFRICA AND INDIA

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Abstract
The efficient municipal service delivery, expectations and perceptions of citizens are one of the important issues which are central to any municipality across various parts of the world. Among these issues, the transparency and accountability, management of funds for local development attracts special interest among citizens, organization, NGOs, and other stakeholders involved in the development process. The vicious cycle of financial constraints and poor service delivery often results into diversion of funds from earmarked development areas to the areas demanding priority attention. These issues still remain unaddressed and hidden in the absence of appropriate transparent and open government accessibility at internal as well as external levels within the municipal context. The paper highlights key findings from selected metropolitan cities of South Africa and India by doing exploratory comparative analysis about to what extent are the municipal websites addressing the issues of transparent and open governance. The assessment of municipal websites is focused on the issues of access to information on development funds and projects at local level to citizens and other stakeholders. The web content analysis on selected cities provide a background for discussion on the areas of concern to address the key gaps and initiatives for enabling transparent and open governance through municipal websites.

KeyWords: Transparent and Open Governance, Municipal Investments, Development Projects, e-Governance, Web Analysis, e-Readiness & Preparedness

INTRODUCTION

The efficient municipal service delivery, expectations and perceptions of citizens are one of the important issues which are central to any municipality across various parts of the world. Among these issues, the transparency and accountability, management of funds for local development attracts special interest among citizens, organization, NGOs, and other stakeholders involved in the development process. The vicious cycle of financial constraints and poor service delivery often results into diversion of funds from earmarked development areas to the areas demanding priority attention. Such diversion of funds may not necessarily address the actual priority needs of the citizens in terms of various basic issues like: housing needs, civic services, health, security, social benefits etc. The vested interests of political and administrative nature often give rise to further diversion of funds to non-priority and non

equitable system of planning and governance at local level. Such issues still remain unaddressed and hidden in the absence of appropriate transparent and open government accessibility at internal as well as external level.

E-Governance is often seen as one of the mechanisms which address the needs of local governments in terms of bringing transparent and open government to citizens. There are numbers of successful attempts across municipality's world over which reflect the initiatives of municipalities in terms of bringing reforms in the areas of information, technology, accessibility, transparent and accountable government. Some of these initiatives have resulted in partial benefit to the government if discussed in terms of value add to focus the issues of bringing transparent and accountable government. The access to appropriate information related to disbursement of funds for equitable development purposes at local level still remains as one of the gaps to address the access of information to citizens and other stakeholders through municipal websites. The concept of transparent and open government is one of the areas which are much in debate in bringing the municipal reforms. E-Governance, application of ICT and other municipal structural reforms are one of measures which are perceived to achieve transparent and open government.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

One of the important objectives of municipal web system is to facilitate the necessary information to the citizens and provide associated services. The access to information is one of the keys of facilitating the transparent and open governance system. The objective of the paper is to highlight the existing levels of extent of transparency and open governance systems at local level, by doing an exploratory research on key indicators of information available to the citizens through municipal websites in areas of infrastructure development, and investments.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dimensions of Good Governance

The dimensions of good governance at the municipal level are manifold. Good governance has eight major characteristics: participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law (UNESCAP 2010). From another perspective, UNDP lists nine characteristics of Good Governance namely participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus/ orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and strategic vision (Kettani et al 2006). UN-HABITAT recognizes that good urban governance is characterized by the interdependent principles of sustainability, equity, efficiency, transparency and accountability, security, civic engagement and citizenship. The agency's Global Campaign on Good Urban Governance aims to increase the capacity of local governments and other stakeholders to practice good urban governance, promote transparency, and fight crime and corruption (UN-HABITAT 2010).

The performance dimensions of municipal management much researched upon include: planning, finance and service provision. The municipalities are managing the provision of services either through an in-house arrangement or by subletting some of the services for enhanced and improved governance system. Some of the services which are seen delivered

and managed by outsourcing system particularly include: solid waste management system, complaint redressal system, etc. However, looking at the performance of the municipalities, many of the services lack in terms of performance benchmarks. This means that often the service level benchmarks are not met and the services are not provided at the appropriate time or within the stipulated timeframes. There are many reasons attributed to the poor municipal service delivery, performance management or weak urban governance. Some of these issues include: financial constraints, technical resource constraints and lack of appropriate technological adoption and skill sets.

Transition from ICT to e-Governance
Information Technology (IT) has become one of the core elements of managerial reform, and electronic government may figure predominantly in future governance. IT has opened up many possibilities for improving internal managerial efficiency and the quality of public service delivery to citizens (Moon 2002). Electronic government (e-Government) refers to the rapidly emerging global phenomena of the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as the new way forward in public administration. E-Government development very often aims to improve public service delivery capability, as well as public administration, governance, transparency, and accountability through the development of e- Government service delivery capability (Chatfield and Alhujran 2009). The approaches used for conceptualizing e-Government as the basis for framework of good governance include: E-organization- internal government efficiency and effectiveness; E-services - external efficiency and effectiveness in providing services; E-partnering: external efficiency and effectiveness in working with public and private organizations; E-democracy: citizen participation in government decision-making (Carrizales 2008).

Approaches to Good Urban Governance & Service Delivery
The e-Governance programmes in municipalities have traditionally evolved from an urge to make municipalities perform better for delivery of services to citizens and achieving overall performance in its functions. Some of the e-Governance programmes to address the various dimensions of municipal management include: property enhancement applications, complaint redressal system, registration and issue of trade licenses, birth and death registrations, provision of information to citizens through kiosks, websites etc. Many a times these approaches are not integrated with other modules within the system resulting in the isolated approaches being adopted at the municipal level. Besides the introduction of e-Governance tools, the municipalities have adopted programmes addressing specific components of the municipal governance in the areas of finance, planning, and infrastructure development. Some of the known programmes for enhancing improved municipal governance are Municipal Development Programmes (MDP) of the World Bank in across various countries. The other type of interventions include National Urban Renewal Mission (NURM) programme like in case of India, City Development Strategies (Cities Alliance, World Bank, Asian Development Bank), Integrated Development Plan (IDP), etc.

As evident from municipal cases, the existing approaches to achieve good urban governance are primarily focused on introduction of e-Governance system at municipal level. The approach adopted is a step wise process because of e-Governance readiness level of the municipalities. The municipalities have different e-Governance maturity level due to the organizational complexities, technical and financial resource availability. Due to these complexities, the adoption of such initiatives is limited at isolated levels by either targeting the revenue enhancement, or service provision through the application or adoption of new improved system using ICTs. The benefits of such improved adopted system results in the

isolated efforts and governance at the municipal level, without bringing much tangible results. However, this may bring specific improved governance within a particular system like revenue enhancements, service delivery provisions or planning at an isolated level. On the other hand, the management, planning and development programmes focus more on the capacity enhancement for achieving improved urban governance. Such programmes often have longer gestation periods and achieving good urban governance is based on specific reform areas.

INTERRELATIONS OF GOVERNANCE, GOOD GOVERNANCE, E- GOVERNMENT AND E-GOVERNANCE

The concept of e-Governance hasn't come suddenly, and has come from the concepts of 'Governance and Good Governance'. The Good Urban Governance came into existence as a result of crisis in municipal governance particularly in developing countries. As discussed in earlier section, the term 'governance' encompasses areas of economic, political and administrative authorities to manage multitude of affairs at various levels. The term Governance was used by World Bank in 1989, which came from their document 'Sub- Saharan Africa' in the context of identification of four parameters which related to governance: public sector management, accountability, legal framework for development, and information & transparency (Bhattacharya 2006). In 1992, the World Bank expanded the scope of governance and replaced it with the term 'Good Governance' in its document entitled 'Governance and Development'. The term 'Good Governance' covered the aspects related to: the form of a political regime (parliamentary or presidential, military or civilian, authoritarian or democratic; the process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources; and the capacity of government to design, formulate and implement policies and in general, to discharge governmental functions (Mishra 2003).

The term e-Government was used for the first time in 1975 by novelist John Berto in his science fiction novel with the same title 'e-Government'. The novel subject dealt about computer network for a comprehensive government that governs and control people. A literature on IT in government goes back to early 1970s, much of the concepts revolved around computing in government organizations, but the concept of e-Government was born out of internet revolution. The evolution of e-Government started in mid 1990s when the World Wide Web (WWW) became widely available by WWW Consortium, after the finalization of its standards in 1996 (Kraemer, et al, 1978, Danziger and Anderson, 2002, Gore 1993; Salem 2003). At a global level, the real use of e-Government is traced back to
1995, by Central Post Office in the State of Florida for implementing the concepts on its administration.

By 2000, US administration launched several initiatives for e-Government as Red Tape Cut, for the start of new phase of life of the American people. During the same time, European Union adopted the decision of putting all available programs of e-Government available to all Europe on the internet. In terms of legislation, France was the first European country for the regulation of e-Government work in 2000. By late 2001, global level e-Government domain indicators as well as the effectiveness of e-Government for economic growth were prepared by United Nations in Association with American Society for Public Administration (Heeks 2002). Much of the earlier literature concerns the use of IT within the government, office automation etc while the recent e-Government literature focuses / discusses the concerns

related to external environment / services to citizens, and includes the larger spheres of government like organizational change and the role of government (Ho 2002). The concepts of e-Government & e-Governance have evolved from the use of ICT by government agencies to electronically deliver services to internal and external relationships of government.

There were several views and perspectives of institutions, experts and researchers on concept of electronic government, as the concept of e-Government or e-Governance is relatively new in the field of ICT knowledge, being discussed since last one decade. The different perspectives on e-government and e-governance are reflective of the numerous functions and possibilities as adopted by institutions and cities worldwide. Both the concepts of e- government and e-governance refers to 'government' as a superstructure that deals with decisions, rules, implementation and outputs of its policies; whereas 'governance' refers to functioning based on processes, goals, performance, coordination and outcomes. The governance is seen as the larger facet of government. E-government is the most frequently cited term in comparison to e-governance, online government, one-stop government and digital government. Riley et. al. (2003) refers to 'government' as a superstructure that deals with decisions, rules, implementation and outputs of its policies; whereas 'governance' refers to functioning based on processes, goals, performance, coordination and outcomes. The distinction between e-governance and e-government is based on processes: e-governance encompasses: electronic consultation, electronic controllership, electronic engagement and networked societal guidance, where as e-government encompasses: electronic service delivery, electronic workflow, electronic voting and electronic productivity (Sheridan and Riley 2006). The e-government is perceived to be a sub-set of e-governance, where e- governance refers to the 'outcomes' as a result of 'efforts produced by public administration, and e-government refers to the 'outputs' as a result of 'efforts expended', in terms of public administration domain (Saxena 2005).

The e-government studies fall under various distinct categories depending on the types of internal and external relationships of government. Most e-government studies fall under five categories, which explore the e-government in areas of: a) managerial practices, b) individual and organizational characteristics, c) IT characteristics, d) measurement of e-government, e) government subcultures; on e-government adoption (Titah and Barki 2006). Information Technology (IT) has become one of the core elements of managerial reform, and electronic government may figure predominantly in future governance. The concept of e-government and e-governance is evolutionary in nature and the research done so far by various researchers touch upon various facets of municipal government and governance systems. The definitions by leading institutions and researchers highlight the key strategic areas of municipal government and governance system which are the key pillars of successful drivers towards improved municipal systems. The dimensions of these spheres touch up various issues which span across the indicators of social, economic, political, technical, financial domains at local level, which act in internal and external context of these institutions of governance. The limited empirical research highlights the need for further research in areas of multitude of municipal spheres of governance, which are largely related to governance at internal level, external level in a networked context of service delivery. There is need to have detailed empirical research which focuses on the aspects which could improve the service delivery in terms of effective and efficient service delivery levels. One of the areas related to governance is about transparent and open government system, the concept of which has evolved recently, yet very limited empirical & exploratory research studies are available on this theme.

Table 1: Spheres of e-Government and e-Governance

Period	Knowledge Body	Spheres of e-Government
2001 - 2009	International / Institutional Agencies	Internet, World Wide Web (WWW), citizen services, public information, transformation of government, technology, administrative processes, better government, businesses, citizen empowerment, revenue growth, government operations, transparency, cost reductions.
1996 – 2010	Experts / Researchers	Government operations, citizen engagement, government services, digital information, delivery of government services, intergovernmental agencies, customers, transactions, digital government, e-Service, e- Management, e-Democracy, e-Commerce, ICT innovations, internet applications, web-based services, business partners and employees, process of reform, equitable participation, accountable government, efficient and effective government, transparency and accountability, quality services.
Period	**Knowledge Body**	**Spheres of e-Governance**
2001 - 2009	Experts / Researchers	Good governance, delivery of government services, citizens, businesses, citizen empowerment, efficient government management, increased transparency, lesser corruption, networking and digital connections (internal and external), electronic service delivery, interaction between citizen and government, public administration, re-invention, re-engineering, self regulation, decision making process, information flow, transparency, civil society strengthening, ICT channels of change, knowledge based government, knowledge based economy and society, electronic technologies, public management, digitalization of services.

TRANSPARENT AND OPEN GOVERNMENT

The concept of Transparent and Open Government can be traced to internet developments for providing services to citizens in participative, transparent and collaborative environments. The principles of promoting accountability, participation for information benefit, and effectiveness of government were some of the cornerstone seen for an open government (U.S Government 2010). Building transparent and open government has remained one of the most challenges at various levels of governance to be seen at national, sun-national and local level. With the development of ICT, many countries focused on initializing the information systems in more convenient ways to open the administrative procedures in a transparent and open ways. The need for moving to transparent and open ways can also be traced to rampant corruptions in various processes and functionaries at various levels within organizations involved in public service delivery. The other facet of transparent and open government

system was seen in terms of facilitating transparency in administration and reducing delays (Seongchoel & Keunhee, 2006).

The transparent government also became widely used with the concept of e-Government being used during late 1990s. The policy strategies focused on improving service delivery in government structures through the use of ICTs (Guerrini & Aibar, 2007). Worldwide the e-Government was seen to modernize public administration focused on achieving economic growth, improving everyday life etc. (Anthoponlons et. al, 2006). The development of e-Government promised new area of administration and convenience to citizens in terms of access to basic services (Nikolaos et.al, n.d). The governance through e-Governance measures brought improved government decision making process and citizen's satisfaction in government. This improved system and citizen's trust in government enhanced government accountability and transparency. The delivery of government services and information through e-Governance led various ways to improve efficiency, effectiveness and transformation (Larsen & Milakovich 2005). The improved efficiency, effectiveness and transformation through websites on the internet also led to service delivery processes and shaped the environment in which the government operates. The e-Governance characterized the application of electronic means in the interaction between government and citizens to simplify and improve policy making and service delivery processes (Pathak et.al, 2007). In- spite of various measures through e-Governance, the transparency and openness of governments differed in web capacity and openness. Not all e-Governance initiatives across various parts of the world realized the concept of transparent and open government (Rose,
2009).

The transparency and openness through e-Governance was largely seen to ensure public trust and establishing a system of transparent, participative and collaborative government (Presidential Documents, 2009). The transparency and openness enabled and important break away of the old model of citizen-public administration lengthy process and interaction of bureaucratic red tape system. The transparent and open government system through e- Governance became a potent tool for citizen empowerment in terms of electronic administration (Willonghby, Gomez, Lozano, 2010). The limitations in satisfying the accessibility and the right content through e-Government websites has become one of the crucial factors for online services to citizens (Fogli, 2009). In making government more accountable, transparent and effective, it is assumed the role of web will play a key role in transforming relations between citizens and various stakeholders in the governance process (Kolsaker & Kelly, 2007). The governments can transform governance though information and technology systems for bringing public sector reforms (Carrizales, 2008). "Increased openness is also intended to increase the incentive for public institutions and public servants to perform to the highest standards, while also allowing citizens to contribute more to the achievement of public goals" (Jojnston, n.d). The emergence of widespread use of e- Governance technologies providing electronic information and services to citizens and businesses facilitated governmental units in reinventing their functions and processes of providing efficient and transparent government services (Shan, et.al, 2011).
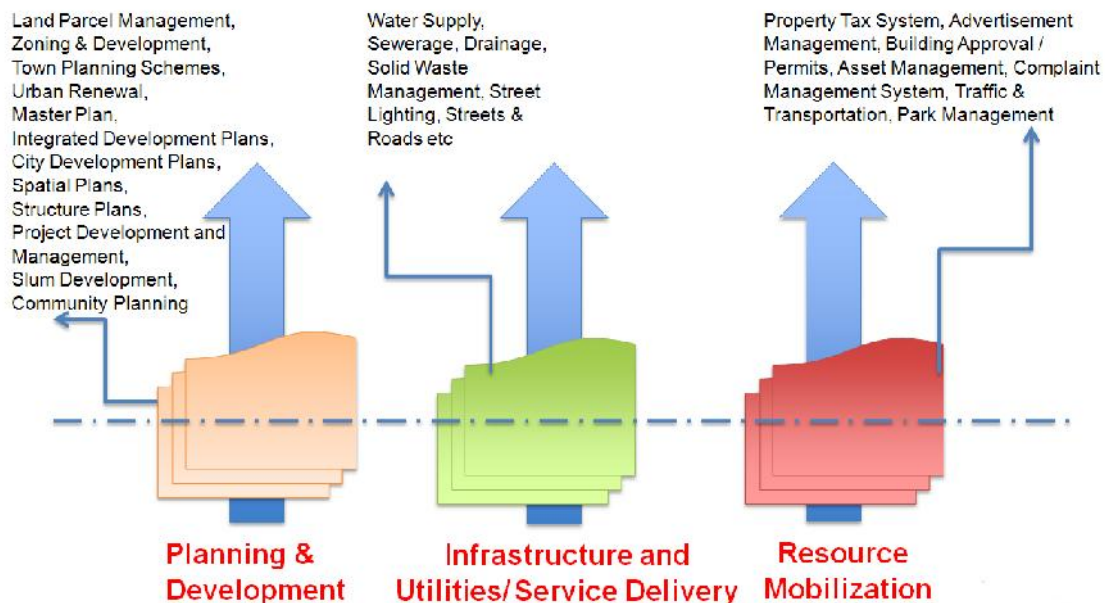
Land Parcel Management, Zoning & Development, Town Planning Schemes, Urban Renewal, Master Plan, Integrated Development Plans, City Development Plans, Spatial Plans, Structure Plans, Project Development and Management, Slum Development, Community Planning

Water Supply, Sewerage, Drainage, Solid Waste Management, Street Lighting, Streets & Roads etc

Property Tax System, Advertisement Management, Building Approval / Permits, Asset Management, Complaint Management System, Traffic & Transportation, Park Management

Planning & Development

Infrastructure and Utilities/Service Delivery

Resource Mobilization

Figure 1: Dimensions of Transparent & Open Government

NEED FOR TRANSPARENT AND OPEN GOVERNANCE

Urban governance deals with complex issues and the municipalities find it extremely difficult to provide efficient delivery of basic services to its citizens. This is largely driven by the prioritization of various multitudes of services, and which in turn neglects the areas of attention in terms of service provisions, project funding investments and organizational management. The municipalities recognizing this vicious cycle have taken number of initiatives to integrate the concepts of Good Urban Governance. The e-Government and Open Government objectives are directed towards bringing more transparency, the later being dependent on the outcomes of the e-Government. The e-Government is seen to produce transparency where are open government is seen to bring in more like participation and collaborative mechanisms between various stakeholders. The reliability of e-Government and the Open Government both depend on the web-enabled technology, which are largely driven by preparedness of various governments in terms of e-readiness and political will (Gustetic, n.d). The ICT applications to transform the government have been in use to drive down the public service delivery costs, and extending citizen-government relationships. The e- Government was seen as bringing technological and new entrepreneurial culture in the areas of administration (Banister & Connolly, 2011).

The research on the transparency models in government bodies focus on improving communication at various levels in terms of participation, substantial information, accountability, secrecy, communication practices, organizational support and adequate resources. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become of the core elements of managerial reform, and electronic government may figure predominantly in future governance. The use of IT has facilitated and opened various opportunities for improving the internal managerial efficiency and provision of quality of public service delivery to citizens. The e-Government is rapidly emerging global phenomena of the use of ICT as new way forward in public administration and bringing transparent and open government reforms at local level. The application of e-Government systems and its adoption

of web-based technologies for citizen centric services has become a global trend in the public administration and way of reforming municipalities in efficient delivery of services. The objective perceived of such adoptions is to improve the conventional governance system. Another aspect of its adoption is seen to increase the extent of public accountability through e-Governance measures to increase the interaction between the government and citizens (Wong & Welch, 2004). "While e-government represents a vehicle for improved service delivery that can be seen as the most recent step in a more evolutionary process of public sector reforms and (ideally) improvements designed to improve service delivery capacities and ultimately, overall performance, the pressures for government-wide action and responses are also partially a reversal from the flavour of previous reforms in the public sector dating back to the 1980s, particularly those associated with the movement known as new public management (NPM)" (United Nations, 2008).

The transparent and open government forms part of the good urban governance reforms. Good urban governance refers to 'integrated governance' thus with the inclusion and representation of all groups in the urban society with focus on transparency, accountability and integrity. The common thread across the definitions of good governance and good urban governance relates to management, accountability, delivery and key stakeholders. The good urban governance concerns with functions being performed within internal as well as external environments, the management techniques or adoption of particular systems and technologies for achieving effective governance, and the involvement of the wider community. The dimensions of the good urban governance are manifold, with differences between organizations regarding to these dimensions. The core dimensions as identified by number of organizations include the dimensions of: Equity (includes sustainability, gender equality and intergenerational equity), Effectiveness (includes efficiency, subsidiarity and strategic vision), Accountability (includes transparency, rule of law and responsiveness), Participation (includes citizenship, consensus orientation and civic engagement), and Security (includes conflict resolution, human security and environmental safety).

Table 2: Governance dimensions from leading international institutions.

Governance Dimensions	International Institutions			
	UNESCAP	UNDP	UN-HABITAT	Global Campaign on Urban Governance
Participatory	X	X	X	X
Consensus oriented	X	X		X
Accountable	X	X	X	X
Transparent	X	X	X	X
Responsive	X	X		X
Effective and Efficient	X	X	X	X
Equitable and inclusive	X	X	X	X
Follows the Rule of Law	X	X		X
Strategic Vision		X		X
Principles of Sustainability			X	X
Security			X	X
Citizenship			X	X