E-Government Under Construction:
Challenging Traditional Conceptions of Citizenship

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1.   Introduction

Since e-government has been put on policy agendas around the world it has been strongly
related with a citizen-centric approach in government reform efforts. Through time these
reform efforts have become more ambitious in the sense that where e-government used to be
treated as a tool for modernising government it gradually has been recognised as a strategic
approach to transform or even innovate government from a citizen point of view. These
reform efforts are the more remarkable when recognising the producer-centricity by which the
organisation of public services have hitherto been dominated (Taylor, 2006).
        Recent e-government publications point at scepticism with regard to governments'
achievements on improved citizen-centricity as a result of their reform efforts. Nonetheless
the policy aim itself is still recognised as a fundamental change to improve e-government or
even government itself. For instance, a recent OECD publication focused on how to achieve
better e-government advises the following: "A key challenge is to somehow "turn the
telescope around"- to view the government from the user's perspective, rather than from that
of government. This is not easy; in many cases government will find itself sailing in
uncharted waters. Becoming more user-focused will be counter-cultural, and it will often fit
poorly with "local" interests. But without this fundamental change, user-focused government
will remain out of reach" (OECD 2005, p.42).
        In the EU Ministerial eGovernment Declaration presented at the EU Ministerial
eGovernment Conference in Manchester, November 2005, good e-government services are
acknowledged to be transformed, citizen-centric public services. These services will improve
citizens' quality of life, reduce administrative burdens on citizens and contribute towards
citizens' trust in government and democracy. However, the Ministerial agreements reached at
this conference also recognised that there is still a lot to do to deliver good e-government
services and have them used by the citizen. For instance, EU Ministerial agreements were
decided upon to deliver high impact services designed around customers' needs and to offer
widely available, trusted access to public services across the EU, facilitated through the use of
secure and trusted means of electronic identification and authentication. Moreover it was
decided that no citizen should be left behind in the development of e-government, and that
citizen inclusion should take place by design: "the focus for e-government should be on the
use of ICTs in order to achieve better and more inclusive government. This could include
improved services and policies with outcomes such as increased transparency, inclusion,
accessibility and accountability or greater participation in decision-making, all built into their
design from the outset" (EU Ministerial eGovernment Declaration, 2005, p.2).
        After more than a decade of implementing e-government projects, strategies, and
conditions with a strong focus on the citizen these public statements raise the fundamental
question as to what implications e-government actually has had, and will have, for the citizen.
Does e-government indeed lead to a situation in which the citizen has got an improved,
central position in its service relationships with government? In what way and to what extent
does the citizen encounter changes in its roles and relationships with government by moving
from a paper-based service environment to a digital service environment? And what effect
may this emerging electronic public service environment have on the application of

administrative principles founded upon traditional notions of citizenship, such as universal service and equality for the law?

Although a clear definition is lacking of what e-government is or should be in the future (eg Bekkers et al, 2005; Prins, 2001) awareness gradually rises that the emergence of e-government may coincide with an unprecedented challenge to the institutions and procedures through which public governance is delivered (Leitner, 2003). One of these institutions is citizenship, and related principles and procedures through which citizen - government relationships have been shaped. It is to the exploration of the impact of e-government developments on this institution that this chapter will turn.

To be able to do so we first need to know more about the conceptions of citizenship which have been shaping citizen - government relationships in the off-line world, and how, based on those conceptions, public service provision to the citizen traditionally has been organised. In the third paragraph we apply a citizen-centric perspective ourselves to explore what is actually known about the *e*-citizen and changes in citizen – government relationships after more than a decade of e-government reform efforts. Unfortunately we need to conclude that there is not much useful empirical data available at present. We therefore in paragraph 4 are forced to turn the telescope around and explore in what ways governments have been trying to relate to their citizens in their e-government efforts. In the final paragraph we will analyse to what extent traditional conceptions of citizenship underpinning public service provision in the off-line world are still applicable for the emerging digital public service environment after more than a decade of e-government evolution.

2. Serving the Citizen in a Paper-Based World

Notions of 'citizenship' underpin the way in which relationships between citizens and governments have been shaped. Consequently they will determine the way in which public service delivery to the citizen has been organised. History however shows us that these notions have been changing over time. For instance in our modern liberal-democratic world, the concept of citizenship has a special relationship with history, fraternity and nationality (Heather, 2004).

From an historical point of view, a citizen has an awareness of his relationship to his 'state' and to his fellow citizens. As this relationship changes over time it needs to be understood in its historical context. Smith & Smythe (2000) point out that since the French Revolution the concept of citizenship has been *defined and given meaning by nation states*. Further history provides us with examples of similar roles for the city-state, church, and market-institutions like serfdom. Fraternity expresses the fact that a citizen belongs to a group with a common morality, a common sense of purpose, and engaged in common activities (Heather, 2004). Citizenship identity provides a person belonging to that group with an *egalitarian* membership status. And from a nationality point of view a citizen has both a legal status and a cultural bond related to a certain geographical territory. Formal nationality therefore entails certain *universal* entitlements to a citizen: rights that every citizen is entitled to exercise and which in the postwar liberal-democratic welfare state, can have a civil, political, or social nature. Each of these entitlements emerged sequentially in the modern era (eg Marshall, 1964; Bovens, 2005). Civil citizenship embodies rights that secure individual freedoms, such as liberty, freedom of speech, the right to ownership, and the right to justice. Political citizenship is composed of the democratic rights of participation, such as voting, the right to exercise political power and demonstration. Finally, social citizenship refers to the

rights to a minimum standard of welfare and income facilitated by for instance employment, education and housing.

These conceptions of citizenship are at the basis of public service provision to citizens in a traditional 'off-line' world. Especially due to the emergence of the welfare state in western democratic countries after the Second World War and therefore based on the notion of social citizenship, public service provision to citizens has expanded enormously, resulting in a silo-structured government with different public counters for individual government service domains towards the citizen.

Traditionally, the process of public service provision to the citizen is mainly paper-based and often supported by face-to-face contact. A citizen usually gets authorised access to public services on the basis of manual form filling, the writing of letters and/or the submission of official documents, such as the passport, drivers licence, or birth certificate. As these records are proofs of entitlement to a certain public service they often are stored in personal files, turning public service providing organisations into vast repositories of stored paper records. Derived from the administrative principle of 'equality under the law' the collection and filing of these records however guarantees different forms of administrative equity to citizens: equity in terms of contents (equal service outcome for similar cases) and procedures (equal treatment during the service process). Furthermore, the service accessed by citizens is 'universal', ie within any particular governmental jurisdiction (national, regional, local, functional), rights to the same service level are afforded to all citizens, often based on the egalitarian principle of 'service by waiting list' (Taylor et al, 2006).

Moreover in the paper-based public service world personal identification of the citizen and the verification of that identity through authentication processes reside at the heart of government service provision. Through time authentication processes related to the use of paper-based authentication systems, such as the passport, have been largely constant. The passport holder shows his or her passport to the person officially recognised to check and verify that the document carrier is the person shown referred to through the information, including photograph, included in the document. Set within a traditional environment of trust, these authentication processes often have been supplemented by face-to-face assessment of the citizen by the official, based upon the citizen's appearance of honesty or upon the official's knowledge of the citizen within the local community.

3.   What about the e-citizen?

In the emerging digital era governments are looking for ways to reorganise their public service provision to citizens, making use of the possibilities offered by new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Besides paper-based public service delivery governments are developing electronic public service provision in ways that they might be better able to serve the citizen. That is, even more than under the paper-based public service system they want to take the desires and needs of citizens into account and fit the design of the new digitally based public service system better to the citizen's perspective of government.

In these efforts to set up and develop e-government we may recognise several general phases through time. From their first attempts to put information online governments added more interactive features to their websites and started to communicate with citizens (eg by email). After these 'information' and 'communication' phases we now may observe a phase in which governments are setting up online transaction facilities in their relationships with

citizens, and are trying to develop required digital alternatives for the traditional paper-based identification and authentication means.

Analogously we may observe that governments have been through several development stages of e-government. Usually, these development stages range from an online presence of governments towards a stage at which transformation of public service provision is taking place. Recent studies show that most governments can be situated at these first levels of e-government development (eg OECD, 2003; Accenture, 2003). To be able to reach at higher development levels governments need to be willing to reorganise their entire organisation – not only an electronic public counter or 'front-office' that is. To do so, they are required to approach e-government not exclusively from a technological point of view but to treat it as a strategic issue for the organisation, with many different administrative aspects attached to it as well.

Currently, from a citizen's point of view, e-government is present at many ICT-mediated locations and in many forms. This is not surprising as many public organisations are implementing e-government: government departments and agencies at different administrative levels (local, regional, national, and supranational), but also police organisations, hospitals, schools, public libraries, and lots of other types of public organisations. In addition, Internet portals have been set up where the citizen can have access to the same public information and services as through web-sites of individual organisations, presented however in an integrated way. This situation actually implies that in recent times, especially due to public organisations applying a multi-channel approach, the citizen has been confronted with more public counters than ever before. The silo structure of the public domain seems to have been translated to the digital environment and further networked into different points of public service access for the citizen.

In general, looking at the policy aim to improve citizen-centricity in e-government applications, it is very interesting to observe that the citizen so far hardly has played a role in reform processes related to e-government implementation. Although it is often proclaimed to take the citizens' needs as the starting point for e-government development, reality is that citizens themselves scarcely have been consulted (Lips et al, 2002; Van Duivenboden & Lips, 2003). E-government therefore can be acknowledged as a supply-driven concept: the technology offers governments new opportunities to reorganise their service provision to their citizens (Bongers et al, 2002, p.30).

Moreover it is remarkable to note that there is hardly any empirical data available on the use of electronic public services by citizens (see for instance eEurope, 2004). Consequently so far we seem to know very little about the e-citizen and his or her evolving relationships to (e-)government. What we do know is primarily based on quantitative data about whether the citizen is consuming online public services, how much, and with what degree of satisfaction. In general the available survey results show that the take-up of e-government services stays rather limited and in some countries even declines (eg eEurope, 2004; eUser Population Survey 2005; Dutton et al, 2005).

Survey results from the USA for instance show that 77% of Internet users were e-government service consumers in 2003. This consumption however could imply the full range of e-government service provision, from visiting government web-sites to emailing government officials. Compared to 2002 this figure represented an increase of 50%. However, citizens who contacted government said they would more likely to turn to traditional means - either the telephone or in-person visits - rather than the Internet to deal with government (Horrigan, 2004).

Comparably, a recent survey in 10 selected EU member states points out that although a large part of the European population is online at present, a relatively small proportion of Internet users are users of e-government services (11%). Interestingly, a much larger

percentage of online users uses government services (eUser Population Survey 2005). In general in European countries, the media channel used by citizens when contacting government is still overwhelmingly face-to-face. In some countries, such as the UK and Ireland, the use of the postal service (70% in the UK; 68% in IE) and the telephone (74% in the UK; 67% in IE) has overtaken face-to-face contacts (50% in the UK; 64% in IE) and is much higher than online contacts (23% in the UK and IE) (eUser Population Survey 2005).

Unfortunately these little available empirical data prevent us from gaining deeper and more qualitative understanding about what is happening to citizen – government relationships as a result of e-government implementations. As what we currently see in e-government is what we measure, the more fundamental question here is whether we are using the right perspective to make judgements about potential changes going on in citizen – government relationships, and the citizen-centricity achieved by e-government. E-government projects are, by definition, information intensive; they often involve large-scale sharing of data, much of it personal data about the citizen; and increasingly these projects involve the personal identification and authentication of individual citizens as they consume electronic public services. First observations of the changes in information relationships between citizen and government due to shifting from a paper-based public service system to a digital public service system learn us that there may be more to this than the available statistical data reveal to us. The creation, collection, exchange, use and holdings of information involved in e-government projects are of paramount significance to our full understanding of citizen - government relationships, yet little discussed in the gathering literature on e-government (Taylor, 2006). Now that ICTs are being applied more and more extensively in citizen – government relationships and new information resources about the citizen are being developed, deeper questions about the implications for citizens and citizenship need to get our full attention as e-government scholars, to be able to truly design future e-government in a citizen-centric way.

Unfortunately, as we have learned from this paragraph, we are lacking the required empirical data to be able to address these questions properly at present. This would require a profound empirical study to the nature of change in relationships between government and citizen as a result of e-government implementation.[1] Consequently at this stage we will make use of available data on general trends in citizen-centred e-government development, while putting these trends into an historical context – like the vast literature on citizenship development has taught us. In doing so we would like to explore in what way governments have been trying to relate to their citizens in e-government relationships and, with that, to what extent the traditional notions of citizenship underpinning the paper-based public service system can be recognised in the emerging digital public service arena after more than a decade of e-government evolution.

4.   A Decade of E-Government Policy Strategies and Putting Citizens First

In the evolution of e-government policy design we may observe that the e-government domain gradually has been broadened up in several ways. First, from an exclusive focus on public service provision governments have widened their perspective on e-government to

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[1] An empirical study in this area is conducted at the Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford: ESRC e-Society Project: Personal Identification and Identity Management in New Modes of e-Government
Ref : RES-341-25-0028

include all primary processes of government (agenda setting, policy development, policy evaluation, *et cetera*). Secondly, governments have been including different citizen roles in their e-government designs after an exclusive focus on the customer role of the citizen. Thirdly, governments gradually have been recognising the value of (new) information sources deriving from the citizen to improve e-government design and better meet e-government policy ambitions. In the following sections we will have a more detailed look on how citizen-centred e-government evolved in time. Broadly we can distinguish four major trends in each of which the citizen has been differently addressed.

Treat government as a business: the citizen as a customer

"*Today, information technology can create the government of the future, the electronic government. Electronic government overcomes the barriers of time and distance to perform the business of government and give people public information and services when and where they want them*" (US Federal Government, 1993, p.4). One of the first visions on what electronic government might be can be found in a 1993 US Federal Government policy document called 'Reengineering Through Information Technology'. At that time US Vice President Gore carried out the National Performance Review, an extensive review of the US Federal Government's functions and performance which resulted in an agenda to create a more effective and efficient government. ICTs were acknowledged as important tools for changing the structure and functioning of government more towards the needs and desires of citizens (Lips & Frissen, 1997). Moreover this early perspective on e-government reveals the e-commerce analogy of e-government in those days (see for instance Hagen & Kubicek, 2000). Similar to online commercial services public service customers could have 24/7 online access to public services provided by a seamless government instead of a range of stove pipe organisations, which obviously would contribute to the citizen's "customer experience" of government.

This early e-government thinking matches the ideology of the influential New Public Management (NPM) reform movement in public administration in the 1980s and 1990s. According to NPM ideologists government needed to be reshaped in order to function better in modern times. An important change in perspective for governments has been the introduction of a service orientation: government needed to better connect with its citizens and become more responsive to societal developments by improving access and use of public services (Bellamy & Taylor, 1998). For instance, a major trend in early day e-government was aimed at creating improved access to public services for the citizen. In many cases single points of access to electronic public services were created. These so-called 'one-stop shops' offered governments the possibility to present themselves in an integrated way to the citizen, overcoming the dominant silo-structure of government and therefore better fitting the acknowledged citizen's perception of government. A further improvement of access to public service provision was offered by governments with the introduction of integrated online service provision organised around "life events" of the citizen, ie a rearrangement of public services in categories of situations that citizens would need at various points in their lives (eg Bhatnagar, 2004). Other alternatives to improve access to public services from a user-centred perspective were to offer public services through a variety of service 'channels': offering the customer a choice in doing business with government; And, to offer public services directly to the citizen in an automatic way, ie without any 'off-line' interaction between government and the citizen, also called 'no-stop shopping' (Bekkers, 2001).

Balancing e-government: the citizen as a democratic participant

During the development of e-government projects around the world several authors concluded that in many cases a narrow definition of e-government was used, limiting the meaning of the concept to the provision of electronic public services (see for instance Office of the e-Envoy, 2001; EC, 2003; Leitner, 2003). More and more, a wider understanding of the concept of e-government has become broadly accepted. For instance, in 2002, the German Bertelsmann Foundation published a report on what they called 'balanced e-government', a combination of electronic information-based services for citizens with the reinforcement of participatory elements (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2002, p.4). In 2003, in a Communication on the Role of e-Government for Europe's Future, the European Commission emphasised that the introduction of ICTs in public service provision to the citizen not automatically would lead to e-government. From the point of view of the European Commission e-government could improve both user-centric public service provision, democratic participation and transparency, and policy making, if ICT-implementation would be met by a vision on organisational change and new skills (EC, 2003).

Also others have pointed at the need to use a wider perspective on e-government which would be more in conformance with a citizen's perspective of the full range of government's tasks and activities – not restricted to public service provision but including democratic participatory tasks and activities that is (see for instance Leitner, 2003; OECD, 2003; Grönlund, 2003). Opportunities for citizen-centred e-government were perceived in situations in which governments and citizens were not opposite each other, 'us-versus-them', but in which partnerships would be build between government and citizens (Silcock, 2001). The later emergence of a wider perspective on e-government can be further explained by the fact that initially governments made an explicit distinction between policy in the field of public service provision ("e-government") and policy to stimulate online democratic participation of citizens ("e-democracy"). Moreover the narrow focus on public service provision in the early days of e-government could be further explained by the fact that political attention, money and efforts were mainly available for the realisation of electronic public service delivery to citizens and businesses (6, 2001).

More productive e-government: the citizen as a democratic supervisor of the state

Efficiency gains and the business case for e-government more and more have received close attention of politicians and policy makers (see for instance the UK Efficiency Review: Gershon, 2004; OECD, 2005). Service and process integration among government agencies not only warrant seamless public service provision, but also substantial cost reductions for both government and the citizen. For government, e-government could achieve economies of scale and reduce duplication of services or processes (OECD, 2005). And also for the citizen, e-government could decrease duplication of processes (eg form filling, supplying personal data). As an example, a recently adopted e-government policy strategy is to look for possibilities to achieve a reduction of the administrative burden upon a citizen by means of citizen-centred e-government (eg EU Ministerial eGovernment Declaration, 2005). Increased standards for the effectiveness of electronic public service provision to the citizen and for the internal efficiency of the public organisation concerned have become important renewed policy ambitions of e-government programmes around the world. Consequently, governments use ICTs for automation, collaboration and integration of both their internal and external operations to be able to create value for money for the taxpayer. As an example, back-office integration, faster turn-around of public service delivery, and more recently the introduction

of shared services can be mentioned in this respect, but also the development towards more online 'self-service' counters for the citizen (eg Grönlund, 2003). Increasingly, the impact of e-government projects is evaluated and monitored, both from a government and a user-perspective.

Moreover, online public service integration may contribute to increased transparency for the citizen (eg EU Ministerial eGovernment Declaration, 2005). As a result of their NPM reform ambitions governments have sought to focus on output and outcomes to improve their ability to deliver what they promise (Kettl, 2000). Online availability of comparable outputs of a specific government service (eg primary education, health) can offer citizens better insight in the performance of government. This situation makes it easier for citizens to 'vote with their feet' and therefore to be better able to hold government accountable for its performance. Governments themselves may actively seek to improve transparency and accountability to the citizen through their e-government policies (eg EC, 2003), or citizens may actively look for public information available online to be able to make comparisons and assessments on government's performance in a rather easy way (eg rankings of public schools, waiting lists in health care).

Next generation e-government: the citizen becoming a unique customer

E-government definitely seems to have reached a new development stage as the November 2005 EU Ministerial e-government declaration may show us: "as our e-government services become more transactional, the need for secure electronic means of identification for use by people accessing public services is essential for citizen trust and in ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of our public administrations." (EU Ministerial eGovernment Declaration, 2005, p.5). Governments around the world are introducing, managing and using digitised personal identification and authentication systems in addition to, and increasingly in replacement of, traditional paper-based forms of personal identification and authentication. Authentication, or the assurance that a person is who [s]he says [s]he is, is generally acknowledged as an essential requirement for the provision of many government services to citizens. Digitised personal identification and authentication systems thereby become the *sine qua non* of successful e-government (Lips et al., 2006). Emerging within the digital era are three main ways of identifying a person operating within an electronic environment: accepting a self-declared statement of identity that draws upon details known by that person about who they are (eg a username, registration number, address details, password, PIN); accepting an item of identity the person physically possesses (eg a smartcard, electronic tag, mobile phone); and scrutinising aspects of the physiological identity of the person (eg fingerprint, iris, face, DNA). Moreover these means of identification can be used in combination, as an affirmation of identity and as a step towards authentication of that identity (eg showing a credit card and supporting it with a PIN).

With the increasing use of these new forms of personal identification and authentication we can observe new types of 'personal data' being involved in citizen – government service relationships. In the abstract, these new types of personal data can be perceived in concentric circles at varying distances from the individual's core identity (Marx, 2003). The outermost circle is that of individual information which includes any data which can be linked to a person, for instance a license plate, email-address or click behaviour on the Internet; the most inner circle represents the individual's core identity based on biological ancestry and family relations. In between are concentric circles of private, intimate and sensitive information, followed by unique identification. Moreover in the emerging electronic public service environment we recognise the multiple relationships that the citizen is

developing with government agencies, each supported by an assembled form of a citizen's personal data (cf Fishenden, 2005). For example, the citizen has an Inland Revenue taxpayers identity, a Health Service patient identity, a Social Security identity as a contributor and claimant within the system, a drivers identity, and a resident identity within a public housing scheme. Traditionally, a separate citizen's identity profile was constructed, managed and used for each of these relationships. In the current digital environment it has become much easier in principle to create and manage an integrated identity profile on the citizen, for instance through the use of a unique number (eg social security number), or for the citizen to make use of a singular personal identification and authentication system to access a variety of government services.

Combinations of different types of personal data are at the basis of new forms of e-government service provision. Examples of these new forms are personalised public service provision and Customer Relationship Management (CRM). Within these new forms of public service provision we may observe new and more complex ways of categorising, segmenting and grouping citizens that enable different modes, levels and paces of service provision to be implemented. For instance, both CRM and personalisation have been introduced into business settings in ways that lead to the segmentation and classification of consumer groups so as to allow for the building of models designed to predict consumer behaviour (Gandy, 2000). These models enable the profiling of individual consumers, the aggregation of those consumers into designated 'consumer types' and their targeting for the marketing of goods and services. Moreover, CRM focuses upon the achievement of a longer term relationship between businesses and consumers, leading to a situation where information captured on actual or potential customers may have value over a considerable period of time.

Where CRM is now being extensively incorporated into e-government practices in the UK, personalisation has been introduced only still in a few cases of e-government service provision around the world. Political leaders in the UK however have come to see personalisation as a strong citizen-supportive organisation model for public service provision, providing citizens with 'more power, more information, more choice and more convenience' as well as being a 'route to addressing the disadvantages' of some social categories (Reid, 2004). For Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, personalisation can correct 'information asymmetries' between service producer and consumer (Brown, 2004). Political leaders are thus offering a vision that is inspired by the success of well-known 'dot com' businesses like Amazon.com, Yahoo!, and e-Bay. These companies have clearly demonstrated to be able to deliver online customer-centric services through their ability to accumulate information on customers' browsing and buying habits, their tastes and preferences. The overt capture of transaction data, together with more or less covert data delivered by 'cookies' and click behaviour, for instance, enables these companies to build customer profiles, both at aggregate and personal levels, and to apply new methods of 'collaborative' and 'content filtering' to determine personalised services for each individual customer (Lips et al, 2005).

5.   Changing Conceptions of Citizenship in Developing E-Government

Looking at these e-government developments and comparing them with the traditional paper-based public service system and its underlying citizenship conceptions, several important changes may be perceived.

For instance, in this e-government evolution we may recognise a gradual shift from 'universalism' to what may be called 'particularism' as an underlying conception of

citizenship in an e-government service environment. This development particularly manifests itself when the citizen is becoming a unique customer of government. An individual citizen who, due to good behaviour in using public services, receives loyalty points on his smart card for spending on public service cost reductions, or a citizen paying for an online public service transaction whereas under the paper-based public service system this transaction would have been free, are practical examples of an increasingly particularistic understanding of citizenship, moving away from for instance universal access rights or democratic participation rights to more individually based public service arrangements between a citizen and government. Interestingly at the same time, we may observe a gradual assimilation of different types of citizenship, or universal citizen entitlements, under the flag of e-government. Starting from the narrow perception of social citizenship at the basis of early e-government design, namely the introduction of a universal, customer approach of the citizen in electronic public service provision, the conception of citizenship progressively has evolved back in the direction of its traditional meaning by including political citizenship as a basic notion for e-government design.

Another important change we may observe is the shift from an egalitarian membership status as a citizen to citizen segmentation. Again, this development becomes apparent when looking at the latest e-government policy strategies but can also be recognised in strategies focused at achieving a more productive and transparent e-government. Unique treatment on the basis of a citizen's individual preferences or online behaviour and administrative sorting into 'trust profiles' of citizens for establishing conditional online access to public services are two practical examples of a more differentiating conception of citizenship compared to the traditional administrative equity principle. Remarkable in this respect is that the digital equivalent of citizens' filed records, which have been used under the paper-based service system to guarantee this administrative principle of 'equality under the law', are more and more used to deliver differentiated, tailor-made public services to individual citizens.

A citizenship conception which has not changed much so far after a decade of e-government development, is that nation states are still those government organisations which define the concept of citizenship. Looking at the evolution of e-government so far it becomes more and more questionable whether this situation can be maintained in the future. For instance, civil citizenship entitlements defined for the off-line world and applicable within clear national geographical boundaries, will be difficult to preserve in the borderless virtual territory of many e-government projects. Similarly, political and social citizenship may not be tied in with nationality and the legal status derived from that in future e-government relationships between citizens and governments. Where traditional citizenship attribution in the off-line world usually is based on geographical territory, *ius soli* ("law of the soil"), or blood ties, *ius sanguinis* ("law of the blood"), citizenship attribution in the online world appears to be taking place on the basis of an evolving 'law of informational identity', *ius informationis* (Lips et al, 2006). Borders for access to e-government services will then be set between for instance customers and non-customers of government organisations; identified or non-identified democratic participants; authenticated citizens or non-authenticated citizens. Moreover, analogously to the former Prussian Kingdom where intermediaries like landowners, innkeepers and cart-drivers supported the government in the checking and validation of a person's identity, new trusted third parties, such as banks, ICT companies or credit reference agencies, are emerging in the e-government domain to help government to check people upon their trustworthiness first before getting access to government services.

History has shown us that conceptions of citizenship are dynamic, and that usually these dynamics are initiated by major societal 'crises', such as wars or the French Revolution. The emergence of e-government may not be a natural evolution of existing public sector structures and processes as well (Roy, 2003). Recent societal crises, such as the '9/11' attacks

on the US, may shake the institutional settings of citizen - government relationships in a way that new conceptions of citizenship emerge. We may for instance observe that government is becoming freer in its use of information on the citizen as it seeks to respond both to the demands imposed by CRM and the demands for enhanced citizen safety and state security (Taylor et al, 2006). It again proves the importance of profound empirical studies to the nature of change in relationships between citizens and government, with and without the prefix '*e*', and the ways in which conceptions of citizenship evolve.

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