

What is e-Government for?

Electronic government and government transformation
Technical interactivity, political influence and citizen return

Filipe Montargil
ESCS – School of Communication and Media Studies
East Anglia University, Norwich
17 April 2008

Context

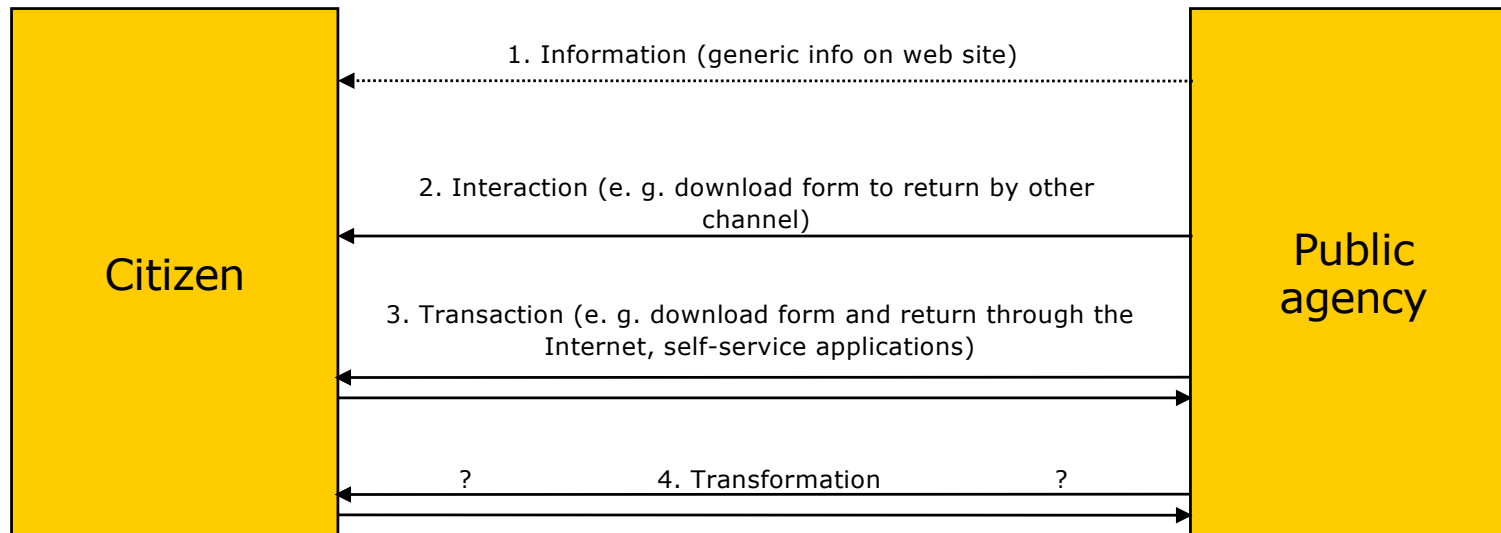
- Internet development, especially after 1991, as a consequence of www creation, lead to the creation of the first electronic government services;
- During the rest of the decade, most countries were inaugurating the online presence of their services and publishing the first generation of information society policies;
- This was included in an optimistic discourse (hyperbolic at times), where words like *revolution* or *transformation* abounded (both by public officials and scholars);
- Every technology has its government revolution, transformation or enhancement enthusiasts (press, radio, cable tv, pc and computer networks);
- So, in this sense, there is nothing new in Internet expectations;
- But some theoretical lenses have been proposed to analyse it, and surveys have been conducted specifically for this reality.

The green paper on public sector information: technical interactivity and political influence in electronic government

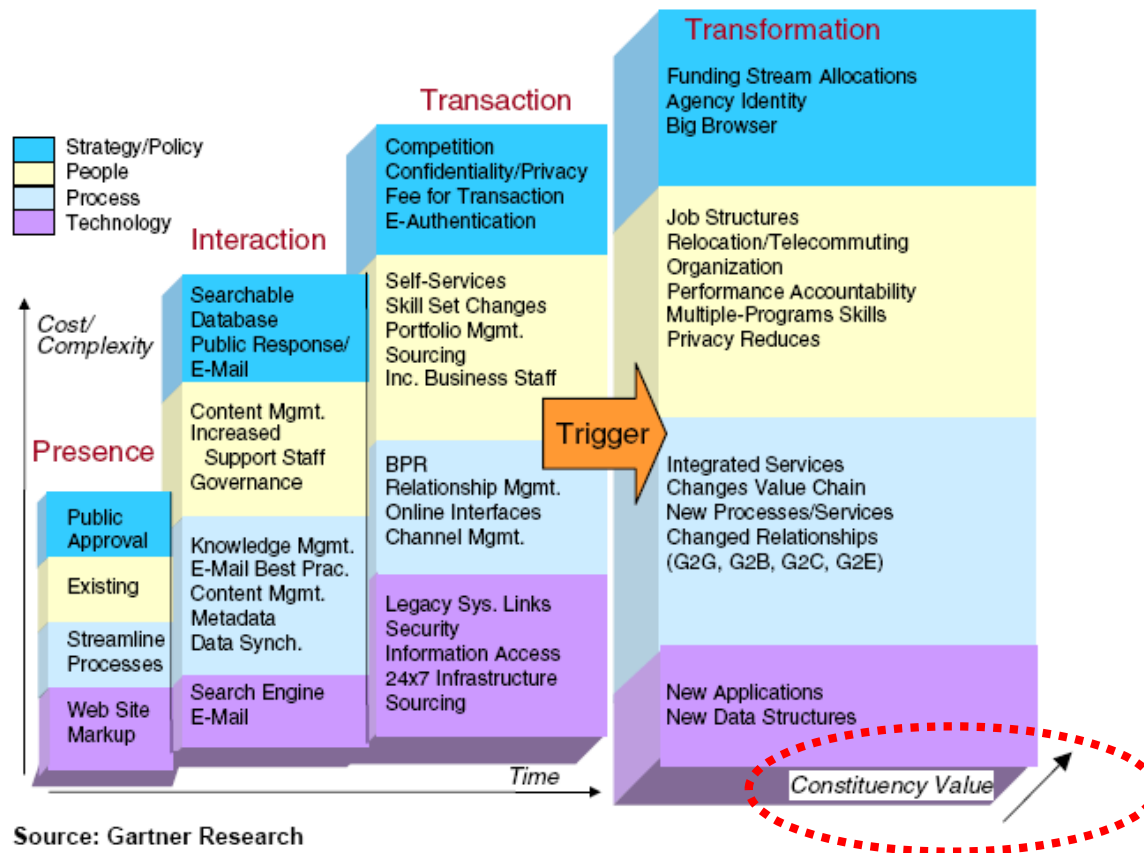
	Information services	Communication services	Transaction services
Everyday life	Information on work, housing, education, health, culture, transport, environment, etc.	Discussion for a dedicated to questions of everyday life; Jobs or housing bulletin boards	e.g. ticket reservation, course registration
Tele-administration	Public service directory Guide to administrative procedures Public registers and databases	e-mail contact with public servants	electronic submission of forms
Political participation	Laws, parliamentary papers, political programmes, consultation documents Background information in decision making processes	Discussion fora dedicated to political issues e-mail contact with politicians	referenda elections opinion polls petitions

Source: Aichholzer et al. (1998: 4) and European Commission (COM(1998)585: 8).

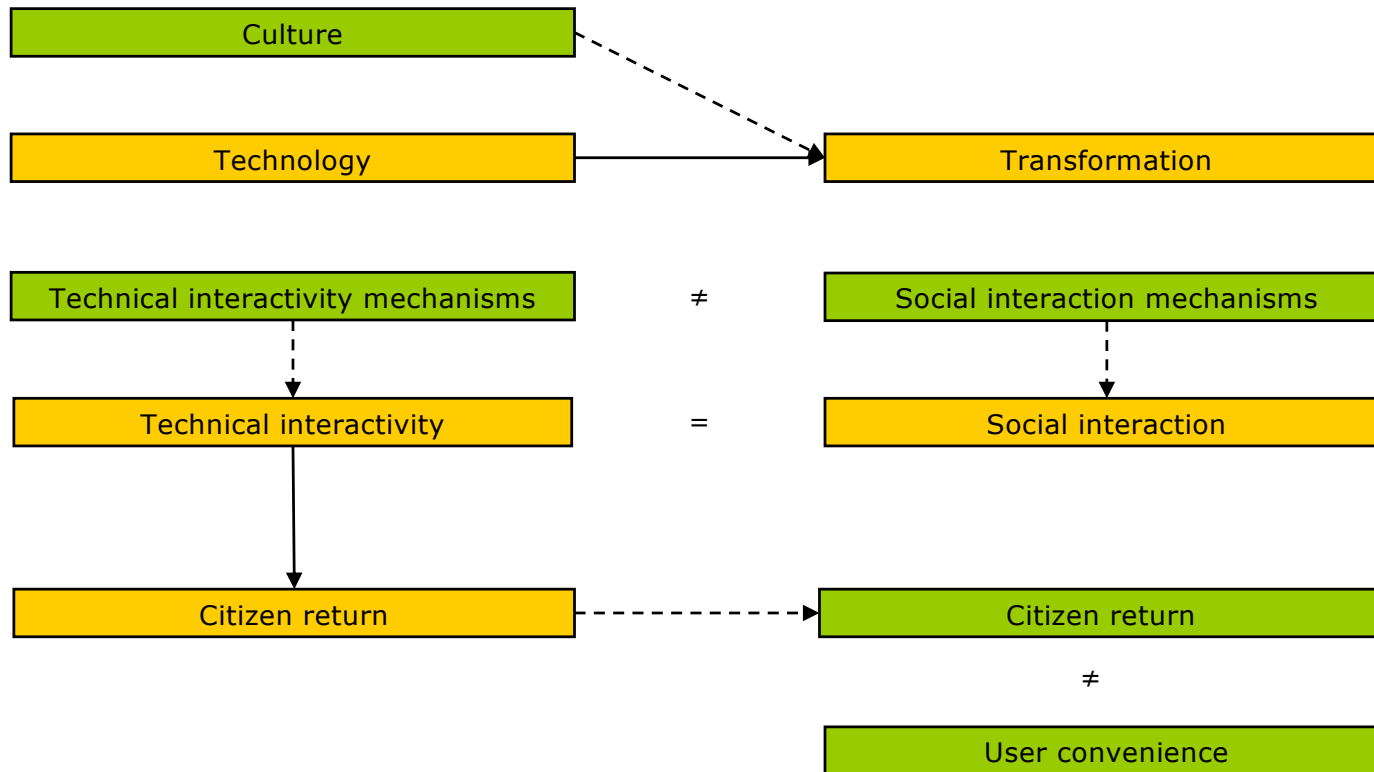
Gartner's four phases of eGovernment services: flows of information in citizen – public agency communication



Gartner's four phases of eGovernment services: transformation and citizen return as resulting from technical interactivity

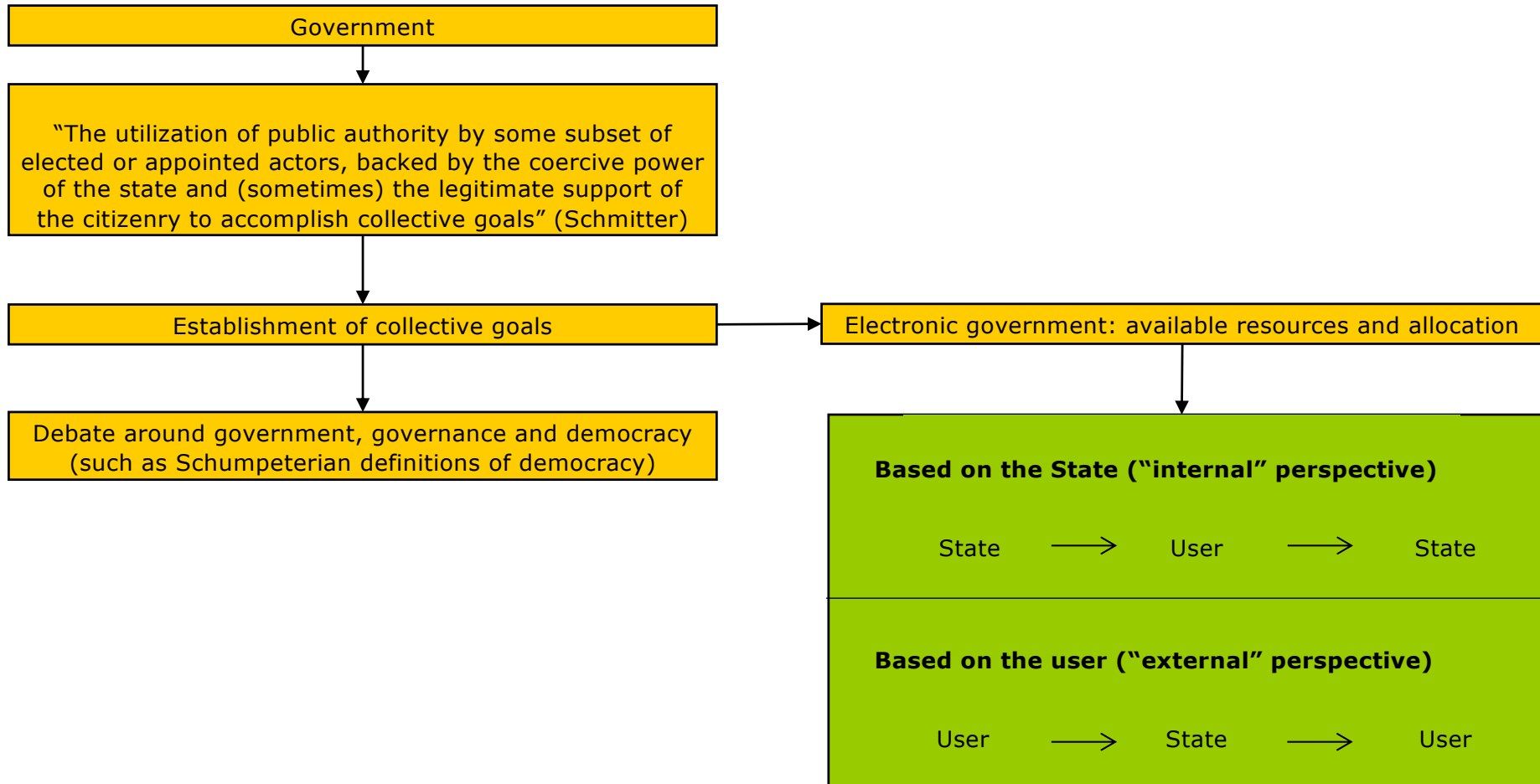


Assumptions in the Gartner paradigm



- Political influence dimension is inexistent in Gartner's model;
- Citizen return is considered to be a consequence of technical interactivity;
- *Electronic* dimension of "electronic government" is stressed, leaving behind the *government* component;
- Useful model to assess level of website development as a delivery channel, to assist the purchase of technology and technology services, but not that so much to evaluate political influence or citizen return.

A concept of government and some implications: service development based on the state vs based on the user



Historic signs of internal perspective. The initial discourse on eGov can justify the hypothesis of a difference.

Some findings from electronic government surveys

Accenture (2000)

Gartner paradigm influence

Service maturity depth: publication, interaction and transaction

Capgemini (2001)

Online sophistication: interaction, two-way interaction and transaction

Brown University (2001)

Electronic services feature

United Nations (2002)

Web presence: emerging, enhanced, interactive, transactional and seamless

Undisputable commitment in the creation of more and more sophisticated electronic government services

Same results can also be explored according to other concerns, beyond coverage and technical interactivity

Some findings from electronic government surveys

Growth in coverage and technical interactivity

≠

Political influence

Singapore

- Second in Brown University 2007 ranking (n=198);
- 23rd in UN's e-government readiness 2008 survey (n=189);
- 1st in 2007 Accenture's leadership in customer service rankings;
- Partly free (Freedom House).

≠

Services developed from user needs and expectations

Interactivity is increasing faster than the citizen participation component in electronic government websites.

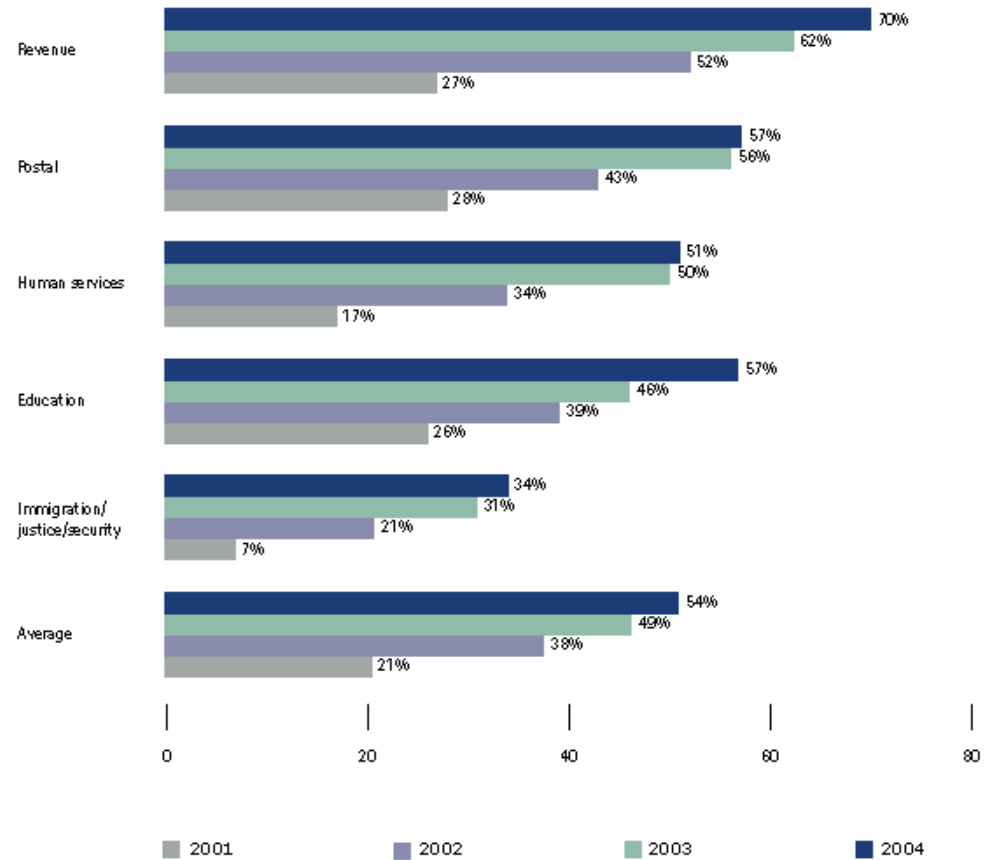
Web measure

	2003	2004	2005	2007	CAGR
EU15	0,56	0,66	0,69	0,68	4,9%
EU25	0,50	0,60	0,65	0,64	6,2%

e-participation

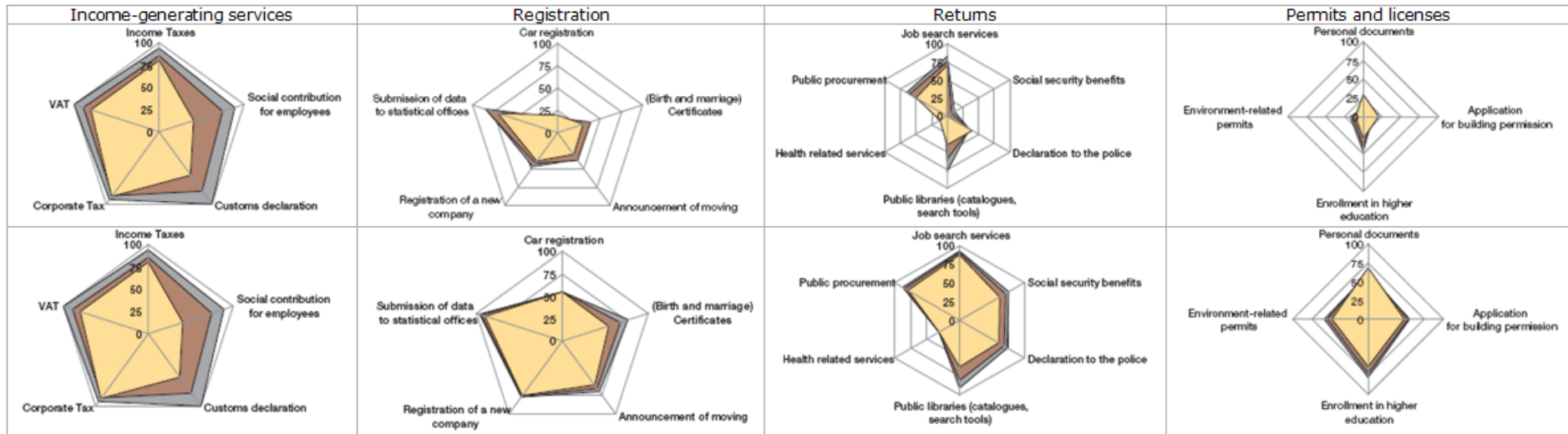
	2003	2004	2005	2007	CAGR
EU15	0,45	0,45	0,43	0,44	-0,6%
EU25	0,38	0,38	0,37	0,38	-0,1%

Some findings from electronic government surveys



Source: Accenture, 2004: 43.

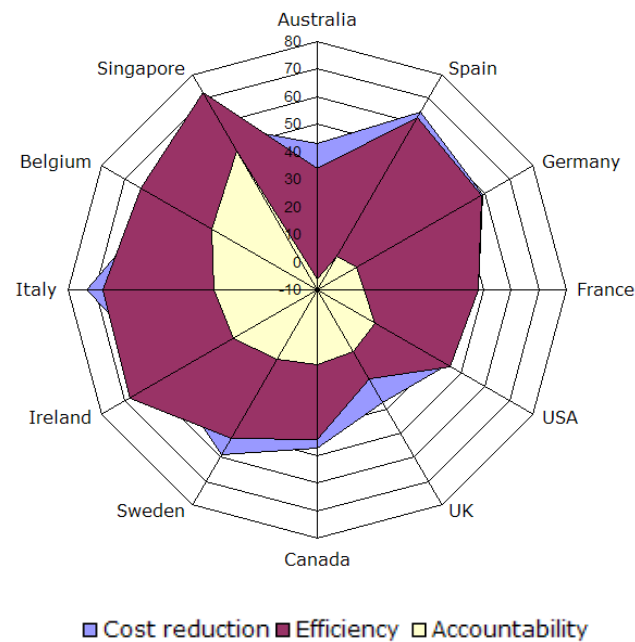
Some findings from electronic government surveys



Source: Capgemini, 2006: 11-13.

Some findings from electronic government surveys

- Some data suggests this trend is not imperceptible to citizens (Accenture survey 2004):
 - "eGovernment will save the economy money in the long term";
 - "eGovernment will make government departments and agencies more efficient";
 - "eGovernment makes government more accountable to its citizens".



	Cost reduction	Efficiency	Accountability
Australia	43%	34%	-6%
Spain	64%	62%	4%
Germany	59%	58%	6%
France	48%	48%	7%
USA	44%	45%	14%
UK	37%	27%	16%
Canada	47%	44%	17%
Sweden	59%	52%	19%
Ireland	52%	68%	25%
Italy	73%	67%	27%
Belgium	54%	63%	34%
Singapore	58%	72%	48%

Electronic government and government transformation

- Technical interactivity is not theoretically equivalent to citizen political influence or citizen return;
- It also does not seem as resulting empirically in it;
- Despite a transformist discourse in the beginning of electronic government policies, since the mid 1990's, evidence suggests that electronic government development, as well as evaluation, has been focused in technical interactivity implementation;
- This seems more a transition of government to electronic, or digital, network platforms than a transformation or revolution, as announced previously in official discourse;
- *Government transformation* is now taking the place of *electronic government* in some documents and is frequently seen as an updating of the concept;
- For government transformation it is necessary to change culturally the way services are developed. This change is attained slowly, gradually, but this seems the only way to change;
- Citizen opinion research, just like qualitative research in the development process or the creation of satisfaction surveys could be a significant contribution. But this can also easily be turned in to the satisfaction with technical interactivity;
- In a context of growing disaffection with political agents and lack of responsiveness, it seems that the opportunity to introduce some government transformation, before electronic government reaches adulthood should be regarded as valuable.