



บทความปริทรรศน์ เรื่อง Governance Infrastructure in
2020, by Erik Johnston

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This article gives the opinion of how the governance infrastructure in the future should be. The author pays attention mostly on the role of IT to enhance the interaction among units of society, and of other elements. He defines “Governance Infrastructure” as the collection of technologies and systems, people, policies, practices and relationships.

After the world entered into the digital era, the government has to adjust itself to the changes accordingly. People yearn for the return of their power for a long time. Today, their wish came true because of the cheaper, availability, and higher power of computers allowing them to turn information into knowledge as well as exchanging it. They have been made aware of what the good government should be like and their rights to participate in governmental activities.

Another challenge for government is changing the government from being an institution to a platform for citizen participation. This approach aims to reduce the gap among many types of people and blend the culture including the pursuit for shared benefits. The author also mentions about the dynamics, adaptations, and complication of systems in a nation. The functions of nation seem to be organic and Governments have a tendency to exclude small and specific groups in society. The technology has brought about even more complex forms of communities beyond the traditional jurisdictions. Real and virtual communities have emerged who are linked by their mutual interests. Therefore, if a government cannot develop its governance infrastructure to serve the changes in virtual boundaries, it will fail in serving the nation as a whole. In addition, it is the responsibility to

generate understanding among social members through the channel of interaction need to be provided by the government. The article suggests that the infrastructure has to be flexible and healthy enough for new social structures in four dimensions: within, between, across and overlapping.

Next, the government needs to move from representation to participation governance. Every country has growth in its population while the number of representative is limited. Therefore, the people's voice has proportionally shrunk. People have to seek for other ways to echo their voices so they turn to open their own space in virtual society. Government has to catch up this trend by providing governance infrastructure for its people. Like in many web boards, there are too many unproductive opinions in the provided platform. It is necessary to design it in a way to encourage people to monitor their valuable space by rating or etc. to make sure that finally government could have the filtered solutions and most practical idea to design its policies.

The infrastructure has to pass mutual accountability to society. Mutual accountability consists of following five components: transparency, liability, control ability, responsibility, and responsiveness. The new governance infrastructure has to deliver them to its people. Government has to build transparency by having correct and accessible information whenever its citizens require. The concept of liability in governance means tying consequences to performance, punish officials who abuse of their authority and rewards for others based on merit. The policies should be changed to behavior-based policies to gain the desired behavior of their citizen so that the regulations will not be

viewed as prohibitions but incentives for good behavior instead. For control ability and responsibility, the article informs that the nature of leadership will finally change at last due to the complexity of the social structure. The role of leaders from planning will be changed to cooperating. They will not be able to solve the problem by themselves but rather ask for help and cooperation from stakeholders. Finally, responsiveness is about policy implementation and evaluation. The feedback and communication from the mentioned process always comes late. The infrastructure has to improve this issue. Currently, citizens find their own ways both legal and illegal to urge government to respond to their needs more quickly.

The article states that a healthy governance infrastructure is invisible. Regarding to the effect of more complex problems in governing, a leader cannot perform his duty by only debating it in the cabinet as before. The paper suggests the opportunities to exploit technologies and systems, bring people to participate in, use policies as tools and other forms of relationship to interact in constructing governance infrastructure. The paper proposes rough idea the usefulness of technologies generating knowledge and practical value. Moreover, government should apply the successful model in capability and innovation from private sectors to public sector in every level. The author believes that sooner or later, the governance infrastructure idea will be adopted. Yet, he does not know about the time frame and path to go. Instead of being passive government, it has to play active role by investing in the governance infrastructure. It will help return the power to people. People themselves are the power controller. It results from the greater participation they have, the more expectations, accountability and promises will have.

The author stated that he would like to suggest how government could make use of technologies for governance. It is true that governance infrastructure should be the collection of technologies and systems, people, policies, practices and relationships, by emphasizing on the usage of information technology. However, practically, the path to get those factors aligned is as tough as the vision of governance in 2020 the government would like its country to be. Governments realized their challenges resulting from globalization although they might have different experiences with decentralization, nested in a multitude of political, economic, historic and social contexts. However, new dimensions of connectedness, interdependency, complexity, uncertainty and collaborative public management within government agencies, and even across international boundaries. In the context of globalization, decentralization, and economic development, local government leaders depend on the support and understanding of citizens and businesses in order to conduct and effectively implement government policies.

Before moving on to 2020, it needs to fix up the problems in the past by going back to the basic. As the infrastructure means the basic facilities, equipment, and installations needed for the functioning of a system or organization, therefore, it should be constructed based on necessity. Governance could be used in many ways: as the minimal state, a corporate government, the new public management, good governance, a socio-cybernetic system and self-organizing networks. Which meaning did government adopt? Do citizens and the government have a mutual understanding on governance? Do they realize why the country needs to shift from how their government

being now to governing without government? Implementing technologies in many countries comes as known as “e-government”. Citizens are the focal point of e-government. The research shows the fact that citizen characteristics need to be properly understood, along with other factors that generate satisfaction, before developing an effective e-Government adoption strategy.

Next step that should be done in parallel is to increase the rate of computer literacy and the number of internet users as well as to improve internet accessibility. For example, in Thailand, the number of internet users is 17.483 million (2009) which is 26.06% of overall population. This fact shows the different level of readiness in using technologies for governing. Another point is the civil servants are counted in this information. Moreover, the central role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the formation and operation of government programs and services, and in network forms of government, requires public administrators to understand more fully the nature of this role.

Nowadays, the representative systems have been adopted worldwide in local, state and national level. The article suggests the infrastructure as another way for citizen's to interact directly. Collaboration among networked organizations to provide services to citizens requires effective ways to share information, certainly, but new kinds of coordination principles and mechanisms are also necessary. Although this approach could bring about deliberative democracy, it still essential to strengthen the representative systems as it is hard to government to consolidate each requirement individually. Local government still has an important role to take care of its specific needs

of the citizen in certain area. Many governments have implemented many “E” systems in Thailand, for example, they have E-auction, E-procurement, etc. Every Government agency has an official website and promotes their activities via social media. The ethical issues have to be considered when social media tools are used in unanticipated contexts. Public participation in knowledge creation through blogs, wikis and the use of publicly available data creates additional problems of data handling complexity, privacy issues and responsibility of data provision and records management that might be underestimated and need to be addressed in appropriate ways.

For the mutual accountability, those five components: transparency, liability, control ability, responsibility, and responsiveness, will be function effectively if there is improvement in social equality. In other words, the policy maker needs to be detachment and make sure their concerns include every group’s interests. This will lead to transparency: citizen can have access to accurate information from the government. While gaining liability from applying intensives instead of prohibiting regulations is a good optional. However, for control ability and responsibility, leaders-policy makers, always play a major role in re-infrastructure. Not only people and public administrator but also leaders do even more need to have understanding in concept and essence of governance including the infrastructure to facilitate governance establishment. Leader is a human. They are many types of leaders as well as normal people such as democratic or autocratic style. Therefore the tendency to change in the nature of leader is still questionable. The responsiveness, it is the right of citizens to follow up their issues which mostly are their grievance from the government. However, the ways of expression should not affect other people’s

rights. Government should design the system to respond to the complaints from the provided channels faster than illegal actions.

Finally, governance infrastructure is based on collaboration, the process of facilitating and operating in multi-organizational arrangements to solve problems that cannot be solved easily by single organization: to co-labor to achieve common goal, often working across boundaries and in multi-sectors and is more than mere cooperation. Current technologies are only tools to ease collaboration.

Reference

Johnston, E. 2010. “Governance Infrastructure in 2020.” **Public Administrative Review** 70 (1): 122-128.