

# **E-Governance in European and South African Cities**

The Cases of Barcelona, Cape Town, Eindhoven, Johannesburg, Manchester, Tampere, The Hague and Venice

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E-GOVERNANCE IN EUROPEAN AND  
SOUTH AFRICAN CITIES

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# Preface

In 1999, Euricur conducted an explorative study on urban ICT policies in Europe. By that time, many cities had become very active in this field. The study described how ICTs could contribute to sustainable urban development, and what cities were actually doing to benefit most from the new possibilities. This was one of the first European comparative analyses in this field, going beyond merely comparing basic indicators.

After completion of the project we concluded that there was much more to the topic, and so we launched a second study that would focus more on E-governance issues. In this underlying study, we make a distinction between various types of ICT policies (e-access, e-infrastructure and e-content), and pay ample attention to the organizational issues that are associated with the implementation of ICT projects. Also, the project's scope reaches beyond Europe, and now also includes two South African cities.

This report could not have been produced without the cooperation of a number of people and institutions. We would like to thank the contact persons in the participating cities: Lluís Olivella (Barcelona), Nirvesh Sooful (Cape Town), Peter de Wit (Eindhoven), Zamilé Mazantsana (Johannesburg), Dave Carter (Manchester), Jarmo Viteli (Tampere), Marten Buschman (The Hague), and Jan van der Borg and Andrea di Mercato (Venice). Furthermore, we are grateful for the financial contributions and support of IBM and Cisco, and Antonio Paolo Russo for writing the chapter on Venice. Finally, we thank our secretary Ankimon Vernède for her support and kindness.

Rotterdam, January 2005

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The information society entails a number of fundamental changes, many of which manifest themselves in cities. These changes affect urban structures (Castells, 1996; Hall, 1998), forms (van den Berg, 1987; Mitchell, 1999), economies (Hall, 1998; Storper, 1996; Thrift, 1996) and societies (Castells, 1996; Sassen, 2001). The development and application of ICTs (information and communication technologies) lies at the heart of these transformations. ICTs can be described as the melting of computer technology, telecommunications, electronics and media (van Rijsselt and Weijers, 1997). Examples of new ICTs are the personal computer, but also the Internet, mobile telephone, cable television and electronic payment systems are included. In the last decade, innovations in communications and information technology have been introduced at rapid speed (Castells, 1996; Forrester, 1993).

There is a growing literature about the way ICTs are changing cities. In this book, we want to contribute to this debate. In our approach, we intend to move away from the abstract macro-idea of ‘the information society’ and instead stress diversity and the ‘local colour’ of the information society, on the urban level. This approach includes the newer strands of technology research in social sciences that focus on the context-dependency of the uptake of technologies. New technologies do not fall out of the sky into a homogeneous landscape and then change it completely: their development and application is embedded in existing economic, institutional, social and spatial structures, and changes them in rather subtle ways.

The focus in this book is on Internet-related technologies and services, as they are relatively new and have the profoundest social and economic implications. Our starting point is that, for a number of reasons, the manifestation of the ‘information society’ varies considerably from city to city. To reveal this diversity, we developed a conceptual framework that helps us to unravel the local colour of the information society in cities. We make a distinction between three manifestations of the information revolution: local electronic content, local access to new technologies and local electronic infrastructure. We suggest that the interaction between the three manifestations drives the dynamics of the local information society. We also suggest how policy – on several levels – might influence these dynamics.

The second part of the book is about ICT policy in a number of cities. The case studies show major differences in policy orientation, reflecting different policy priorities. They also reveal the importance of the national economic, political and

legal contexts as determinants of the shape of the local information society. In this book, we explicitly address the role of private ICT companies, with a focus on the impact of investment decisions of telecom firms on the local endowment of electronic infrastructure.

This book is based on an international comparative study into 'e-governance' strategies. In eight cities we have studied local ICT policies. Our case studies were Barcelona (Spain), Cape Town and Johannesburg (South Africa), Eindhoven and The Hague (The Netherlands), Manchester (United Kingdom), Tampere (Finland) and Venice (Italy). For our purposes (showing and analysing the variety of local manifestations and policies of the information society), this is a good sample of cities. They are located in different countries, which may reveal the importance of the national context. They differ considerably in economic structure and performance. Some are very specialized, albeit in different sectors (e.g. Venice in tourism, The Hague in administrative functions), others have a more diversified economy. As could be expected, each of the cities has its particular focus in ICT policy. However, all the cities share a relatively high ambition level and high expectations of ICT policies.

For each of the cities, we started with an analysis of the available information on the local ICT situation and official 'e-strategy' documents. After that, in each of the cities we have interviewed a number of government officials responsible for the local ICT policy as well as private companies that are involved in the implementation of the policies. Also, we have interviewed ordinary citizens to hear their opinion as 'policy receivers'.

## **Organization of the Book**

This book is organized as follows. In Chapter 2, we present a conceptual framework in which to analyse the local manifestation of the information society. Also, the concept of e-governance is introduced and elaborated. The subsequent chapters (3–10) describe and analyse local e-governance practices in our case cities. Finally, Chapter 11 synthesises the findings, compares the case studies and draws conclusions.

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