

E-government and Trust in the Democratic State

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The research context

- Perceived 'crisis' of citizens' lack of trust in democratic institutions in Latin America
- Assumed significance of democratic government for achieving the Millennium Development Goals of the UN
- Interest of the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) in sponsoring e-government projects to improve trust in government

Main objective and method of our research project

- To establish whether investment in ICT can contribute to improving trust between citizens and democratic institutions
- Study of successful e-government cases in Chile and Brazil

Disentangling concepts

- Trust vs trustworthiness
 - ***Trust***: attitude of citizens towards their government – willingness for reliance and compliance
 - ***Trustworthiness***: attribute of government institutions and actors
 - Trust as citizens' judgement of trustworthiness;
 - Mismatch between merits of trustworthiness of a government agency and trust it enjoys;
 - Possible misplaced trust or excessive suspicion

- Political vs interpersonal trust

Our study concerns trust in institutions and government agencies rather than trust in individual politicians and civil servants

- Government regime vs incumbent government

Our study concerns trust in the system of government (the regime) rather than a particular government in office

- The object of trust
 - Trust in government as political trust
associated with the trustworthiness of political institutions, government agencies, democratic processes
 - Trust in a government agency
associated with the trustworthiness of its services
 - Trust in ICT-mediated services
associated with the trustworthiness of e-government systems
 - Trust in ICT
associated with trustworthiness qualities of ICT artefacts such as ease of use, security

Framing of our research

- Focus on understanding the qualities of trustworthiness of an e-government service
- Trace the conditions that allow the e-government service to be trusted
- Examine the extent to which trust in an e-government service contributes to trust in the government agency that provides it and in the government regime at large

Tax online in Chile

- The government context
- The story of the on-line tax system
- Qualities of trustworthiness
 - Procedural simplicity
 - Transactional transparency
 - Transactional efficiency
 - Technological security

Conditions conducive to trust

- **Technology infrastructure**
 - Bandwidth
 - Technology-related skills
 - Interoperability/openness
- **The tax administration agency**
 - Service orientation
 - Organizational restructuring capability
 - Organizational security
- **Broader government**
 - Political support and commitment
 - National information policies – the significance of the Digital Agenda

Discernible limitations

- Internet access and e-literacy
- Requirements for employers compliance of technical standards and employees' data reporting procedures
- The majority of citizens are not taxpayers and have no direct experience of the government service benefits of the tax online system

Suggested general lessons

The ICT based tax systems in Chile and Brazil show that:

- advanced ICT capabilities in the public sector result in significant improvements of citizens' interaction with government – *improved service trust-worthiness*
- such ICT based services are greatly appreciated by the middle classes they are addressed to – *improved trust*
- such services seem irrelevant for the poor and pose extra burdens to those who have no every-day access to ICT and computer competences – *limits of impact on political trust*