

E-GOVERNANCE IN GEORGIA: CITIZEN-SERVING, INFORMING AND EMPOWERING

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The proponents of ,smart‘ cities frequently make the claim that the digitization of city halls can help cities to become more transparent, responsive and participatory. Primarily made for Western liberal democracies, applicability of the argument in new democracies like the countries of the South Caucasus need to be evaluated. Consequently, we assess the situation in Georgia using a theoretical framework that captures the different ways in which digitization of the public sector may affect democracy. We find that three basic categories can be distinguished: (1) citizen-serving measures, which consist of data analysis and treatment without consultation or data sharing with the public; (2) citizen-informing measures that aim to open new or existing data to citizens; and (3) citizen-empowering measures that allow citizens to raise their own concerns and have a direct impact on decision-making. Utilizing these three categories as an analytical tool we conduct a discourse analysis to investigate the motivations and the impact of the different measures adopted by the Government of Georgia and city of Tbilisi in particular. We argue that the distribution of digitization measures among the three categories impact the degree to which digitization strengthens democracy. For Georgia, and Tbilisi in particular, we conclude that the focus on citizen-serving and citizen-informing measures is necessity-driven and has some advantages, but fails to fully realize a more democratic society/city. Important mediating factors have proven to be the difference between top-down versus bottom-up approaches, the level of trust in institutions, e-literacy and cultural specificities.

1. Introduction

The proponents of ,smart‘ cities frequently make the claim that the digitization of city halls can help cities become more responsive, transparent and participatory [9]. Even people initially critical of such technological adaptation by cities may ease their resistance because new technologies present new possibilities of broader democratic participation and greater accountability. However, this claim, which is primarily made for already democratic environments, needs credence, particularly for cities in societies that have less of a democratic tradition than, say, Boston, Chicago or Amsterdam. In fact, in places like Saudi Arabia and the People’s Republic of China, smart city projects move forward without the promise of more democracy. In order to explore this paradox, this paper presents a framework of three ways in which the digitization of cities may affect democracy and applies them to the case of Tbilisi, Georgia, for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of local approaches regarding the promotion of responsiveness, transparency and participation. Over the past years Georgia has made significant achievements in terms of e-governance as many electronic services have been developed. Moreover, special governmental

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institutions such as the Data Exchange Agency and the Public Service Development Agency have been created in order to implement policies in this direction.

Initially we were focused on Tbilisi as a case study of Georgian smart city, which is justified by the fact that it has best Internet penetration in Georgia, the population amounts to about a third of Georgian citizens, and, consequently, most active users of e-services are to be found there. However, contrary to smart-city examples from other countries, where most local e-services are associated with the municipality, in Georgian case the vast majority of e-services are created by central public institutions, thus covering whole Georgia and not specifically Tbilisi. Therefore we decided not to limit ourselves with Tbilisi-specific e-services and broaden the focus in order to better understand the impact of e-governance initiatives on Georgian democratic development.

The very meaning of smart city is somewhat contested [4]. Generally, the concept refers to the ‘smartening’ of city policies, structures, and processes by the use of newly available digital technology. In other words, a smart city “is a community that has made a conscious effort to use information technology to transform life and works within its region in significant and fundamental, rather than incremental ways” [1]. Areas of potential or actual deployment of smart city approaches range from traffic management and more efficient public bureaucracies to new a generation of policies in the area of crime fighting, public health and energy use. There appears to be some differentiation between more top-down approaches in comparison to bottom-up approaches, and those that rely on a growing private industry in collaboration with town halls as opposed to a more citizen-driven way of doing things. Nonetheless, there is also some broad agreement on the enormous importance of smart city technologies in moving urban areas forward in the twenty first century, when public coffers are empty and citizens demand effective and livable cities [9].

This paper aims to bring about more clarity in the debate about the applicability of the smart city with democratization. To that end, we first develop a general theoretical framework of how smart city features can affect the politics of a city or country. We categorize policies into initiatives that are (1) citizen-serving, (2) citizen informing or (3) citizen-empowering. By linking these categories to theories of democracy we seek to establish a framework for smart cities and democratization. Then we survey the developments concerning digitization in Tbilisi, Georgia and assign each policy or initiative to one of the three categories. We then test how our framework performs by looking in depth at the working of selected initiatives and how these relate to our assumptions. Further, we provide an analysis of better practices and provide a list of concerns that are particularly relevant for newly democratic countries, i.e. countries, in which democratic institutions are less developed.

2. Three ways in which smart cities work: toward a political theory

We believe that the discussion around the ideal character of smart cities – that erupted with the advent of the technological feasibility of smart cities and the ensuing connected political, civic and corporate ‘movement’ – is a very fundamental one. There are different approaches of how theorists present their vision of smart cities and many provide us with a distinct political vision.

Indeed, when Stephen Goldsmith and Susan Crawford write that the digitization of cities brings about greater democracy they are less critical of the vision of a city that is managed in a data-enhanced way than, say, Adam Greenfield in his pamphlet “Against the Smart City” [10]. The former emphasize how the use of data and new technology allows communities and public servants to “revolutionize local government, making it more responsive, transparent, and cost-effective [...] thus thickening the bonds of democracy and the vibrancy of civic life” [9, p. 1, p. 157]. And yet, practically the same phenomenon appears in Greenfield’s critical work as the “optimal management of civic behavior, the formulation of governance-as-a-service and, ultimately, the development of business models for the fully privatized city” [10, p. 22]. This rift characterizes important positions

of what one could call a political philosophy for the smart city. The controversy reminds of the work of Evgeny Morozov's argument that digitization and the Internet do not guarantee freedom and democracy [18]. Rather authoritarian regimes can make use of the newest technology to subdue opposition through surveillance, censorship and targeted disinformation. What supports this claim is that it appears that autocratic regimes more than liberal democracies invest in developing their Internet infrastructure [21]. No matter their analytical differences, what the different parties to the argument have in common is that they say they care about democratic societies and cities.

Based on the UN E-Participation Index as well as the survey of examples of smart-technology in the public policy context, we developed a theoretical framework consisting of three categories, *citizen-serving*, *citizen-informing* and *citizen-empowering* [24]. The framework aims to break down in plain semantics the large nexus of techno-social relations that often hides behind complex and overlapping concepts such as e-government, e-democracy, responsive governance, data-based governance, open data, open government etc. It is designed to add some analytical depth to the existing literature concerning the relationship of smart city and democratization in non- or newly democratic countries. After identifying this three-pillared typology, we aimed to show the relationship of each to democracy and democratization, looking at different schools in political theory. Obviously, all three dimensions are deeply interwoven with and built upon several theoretical schools. For our purpose, we identify one dominant source of such thinking (one that is related to democratization) in order to use our framework as a tool to uncover the degree to which digitized cities in Georgia fulfill the ascribed theoretical aspiration.

2.1. *Citizen-serving*: achieving utilitarian government

For the purposes of the paper we define citizen-serving policies as those which consist of data analysis and treatment without consultation or data sharing with the public. In other words, these are both classical offline services that become available online (e.g. registration of property) and new services specially designed for the civil service to raise its effectiveness. However, the crucial factor here is that in contrast to citizen-informing and citizen-empowering measures, citizen-serving approaches neither aim to open up new data to the public nor provide the citizenry with additional tools for participation. Thus, the citizen-serving approach needs to be viewed as the most basic set of services provided by the government only now enhanced by the use of novel technologies. Many of the services and the data that enables them remain hidden from the public, for instance the parameters that allow to predictive policing. In fact, many services do not per se require data sharing with the public in order to function. The political vision that can be made out behind such measures is utilitarianism, a school of political thought that - like one of its prime thinkers, Jeremy Bentham - puts the "greatest good for the greatest number" [23, p. 92] at the core of its ethical compass. While utilitarians have the wellbeing of the (city) population in mind, they do not necessarily maximize individual freedom or democratic participation as long as this would not be required to enhance overall utility. In the same way, citizen-serving measures in the governance of cities are not necessarily linked to democracy, as even undemocratic communities can make it to their goal to increase citizens' welfare. An authoritarian city hall can dictate the terms of the life in the city as long as citizens appreciate the benefits from such style of city management more than other things that could potentially be delivered.

2.2. *Citizen-informing*: enabling citizens to check on power

In contrast to citizen-serving policies, citizen-informing approaches are characterized by the fact that the administration is making data available, which citizens can engage with in a number of ways. For instance, citizens can use such open data for their individual private or commercial

purposes, e.g. when they utilize school district data to decide where to send their children. More generally, citizens can use data to better understand their surrounding communities and make use of the data for a large number of non-political, personal utility enhancing activities. However, data can also be used for directly political purposes like holding public officials to account and to check on the power of city halls.

This latter use of data relates to a republican (a specific version of the liberal) understanding of government. In a ‘republican’ view of political communities, the ideal condition is one in which no person or the state holds arbitrary power over another individual [6]. Hence, the ideal distribution of power is an equal distribution among citizens so that no-one becomes the slave of another or of the state (Ibid.). Yet, when power is built on knowledge, the distribution of knowledge and access to knowledge among actors becomes crucial to achieving even a limited ‘republican’ version of liberalism. This is also the very foundation of Freedom of Information Acts around the world since the 1960s and of the ‘open government’ movement [3]. Only knowledge that is freely accessible to citizens, journalists and advocacy groups allows for effective checks on those in powerful offices. The belief is also that access to information makes governments better because citizens will force them to. Where city officials are freely elected, information help to unseat a mayor when data show unsatisfactory performance in areas such as crime, schools, roads or traffic. Even where citizens have little choice to freely select their mayors and local officials, transparency can help to exacerbate pressure that may lead to demonstrations, strikes or revolt. Hence, citizen-informing policies both presuppose and cause liberal government.

Data that is shared can have different forms, very often the ways in which it is delivered is difficult to access or work with for many citizens. Some data usually already exist, like public budgets and school performance, and merely require to be made public. Effective transparency requires data to be easily accessible, interoperable, and based on citizens’ data needs.

2.3. Citizen-empowering: platforms for active citizenship

Citizen-empowering measures allow citizens to raise their own concerns and have a direct impact on decision-making. Their focus is defined here to be the free exchange of opinions between citizens concerning their political preferences and their civic life. They are further designed as to aid citizens and groups in their civic engagement with other citizens and the city government. Two different approaches to empowerment can be distinguished: top-down and bottom-up. While top-down measures are created by a city’s administration in order to enhance the opportunities for collaboration with citizens. In contrast, bottom-up variants are wholly funded and operated by the citizens themselves.

The political idea that stands behind citizen-empowering measures is that of participatory democracy with a specific focus on communication and decision-making. Citizens that are empowered to make decisions, whether on election day or through online polls, require a functioning political discourse that differentiates the options and the consequences of any choice made. Hannah Arendt developed an interesting concept here: judgment. Particularly the interpretation of judgment that is found in her *vita activa* exhibits the enormous relevance of a conversation that is conducted in the public realm: she claimed that “political opinions [...] can never be formed in private; rather, they are formed, tested and enlarged within a public context of argumentation and debate” [21, p. 13]. To achieve such a communicative state requires a closely knit community and digital technologies, such as hand-held devices and widespread Internet access, can help to foster such an ideal state [9]. Citizen-empowering approaches create a platform for political exchange and decision-making, though they need not to be driven from the top but can be initiated by the citizens in a bottom-up fashion.

3. The Case of Georgia

3.1 Digitization and Democratization in Georgia

Recent developments in Georgia show that the government tries to comply with international standards in terms of e-governance and online transparency. This assumption is illustrated by the fact that the Government of Georgia joined the international forum, Open Government Partnership (OGP) uniting more than 60 countries. Among other goals this initiative aims to make governments more open, accountable and responsive to their citizens through the development and use of modern technologies. Georgia has already met several taken obligations in the framework of this program in an attempt to demonstrate its aspiration towards more transparent governance. Such steps are reflected in the results of international surveys and reports about e-governance in Georgia. For instance, according to 2014 UN e-Government Survey, Georgia has improved in the overall ranking by 16 positions as compared to the same data as of 2012 [24]. Georgia's e- Government Development Index stands at 0.6 (on a 0 to 1.0 scale) and, as for its Online Service Component score, it amounted to 0.59. Substantial progress was witnessed concerning the online service component in particular. However, despite this considerable progress, Georgia was still placed in low EGDI (E-Government Development Index) level among all measured countries.

Another study, "Global Information Technology Report 2014", released by the World Economic Forum placed Georgia in the group of "Rising Stars" in terms of development of modern communication technology infrastructure. Despite this, an analysis of the given data showed that Georgia has main challenges in the area of developing innovative technologies and using their benefits thoroughly. Most importantly, access to the Internet plays crucial role in the potential impact of modern technologies over ensuring accountability and responsiveness of government. The latest data in this regard showed that about 43% of the population have access to the Internet in Georgia, while 5% are not aware what the Internet is [15]; [2]. With regard to daily use of the Internet, according to the nation-wide survey, about 30% of respondents utilize the Internet on a daily basis [2]. It is worth mentioning that a rather large so-called "digital gap", i.e. uneven development of Internet accessibility between cities and regions, is witnessed in Georgia. In particular, while more than half of the dwellers of the capital (53%) access the Internet everyday, only 12% of the rural population use the Internet with the same frequency [2]. These data reveal possible limited influence of modern technologies over good and effective governance in Georgian politics.

Parallel to positive developments in e-governance, Georgia's progress in terms of democratization is also visible and remarkable. Precisely, according to the Democracy Index by Freedom House, Georgia is regarded as "Partly Free" country. Its performance has been gradually improving since 2004, which was halted during 2008-2009 [5]. Georgia's democratization process was again evaluated better only since 2010. Nowadays, together with Moldova, it is considered to boast Eurasia's best ranking on the Freedom in the World scale. Additionally, after the change of the government in 2012, it achieved electoral democracy status.

3.2 Citizen-serving policies

Digitalization of government services started in Georgia about ten years ago, and nowadays a few very successful cases include UN public service award winning projects such as the "Georgian Electronic Government Procurement System" by the State Procurement Agency of Georgia (2012 UNPSA winner) [25] and the "Online Asset Declaration System" by the Civil Service Bureau (2013 UNPSA winner) [26].

E-services available in Georgia cover many areas such as public finances (e-procurement, e-

budget, e-treasury, electronic debt management system, Human Resource Management System (e-HRMS), electronic revenue service, e-auction, etc.), legislation (Legislative Herald of Georgia), health (e-prescription, registry of pharmacies), libraries (National Parliamentary Library of Georgia has a digital library created within framework of Georgian Integrated Library & Information System Consortium (GILISC) in partnership with EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries), environment, administration (e-Documents, e-Stamp), transportation (Tbilisi Transport Company offers journey planner, timetable, bus in real time & mobile application), accountability (Assets declarations of public officials), human resources (web-site for vacancies in public sector), registries (civil registry, voter registry), official documentation (driving license, car number plates, guns, registration of first-graders at school, declaration of tax-free minimum) etc. The most significant governmental project aimed at e-services is citizen's portal my.gov.ge. The portal was created in 2012 in order to unite various public and private e-services. At the moment my.gov.ge has about 8000 registered users and offers more than 100 services from public sector and private sector as well as a combination of both, and the number is growing on a regular basis. The website is based on one-stop shop principle, for which citizens do not need to know which service belongs to which agency. Next to services commonly available via individual agencies, my.gov.ge also offers compounded services that need contribution of several bodies, which will make my.gov.ge the only place to receive such services as business registration, e- request of public information etc.

As an ideal, the portal my.gov.ge strives to assist with all major life events, such as enrolling in higher education and/or applying for a study grant, looking for a job, retiring, applying for a driver's license (or renewing an existing one), buying, building or renovating a house, moving and changing address, declaring the birth of a child, changing marital status, etc. According to the Data Exchange Agency, further development of citizen-serving measures in Georgia should enable business and non-commercial legal entities to use the portal (at the moment the only service available for businesses is online registration of a business) and will integrate such municipal services as land registration, asset taxes, local taxes, receiving local assistance, receiving a permit, etc. While health and education based services remain the focus, the portal aims to combine major services from the private sector too, for instance, signing up for an insurance policy.

According to unofficial e-development strategy of Georgia [16], 90% of citizens' services should be available at my.gov.ge by 2018; also, my.gov.ge should have integrated 80% citizens and private services by 2018; 90% of services for business and business services are integrated by 2018.

3.3 Citizen-informing policies

There has been considerable improvement lately in terms of access to information in Georgia. The Government of Georgia has taken several important measures in terms of provision of public information. First of all, the 26th August №219 Decree of the Government of Georgia "about electronic request for and proactive disclosure of public information" should be mentioned, which came into force on September 1, 2013 [19]. According to the decree, the administrative bodies of the government were obliged to create a public information page and publish the 2013 public information in the list attached to the decree on their websites. This obligation applied to the Chancellery of the Government of Georgia, the ministries, offices of the state ministers, legal entities of public law and sub-agencies. It is noteworthy that local self-governmental institutions have not taken this obligation until now.

Despite such positive legislative changes, observation, made by Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), one of the local non-governmental organisations working on these issues, displayed that several public institutions (including some ministries, LEPL-s and sub-agencies, etc.) have not created a public information webpage on their official websites by this date [11, pp. 6-7]. With regard to meeting the obligation of provision a wide variety of information

online considered under the decree, comprehensive monitoring revealed that out of about 100 governmental institutions only 4 published all the required information. Also, about 20 governmental bodies were assessed to have the 50% rating of proactively disclosing information. Most importantly, the analysis based on this observation claimed that the scope of accessibility of public information online in Georgia does not comply with the international standards of open governance and accountability [12, p. 68].

Another important tool for acquiring public information about governmental spending is requesting information, which is regulated by the General Administrative Code of Georgia. Apart from written requests, since September 2013, Georgian citizens have the option to request particular information through the united governmental portal (my.gov.ge) and/or official websites of central public institutions. The only limitation is the fact that such mechanism is only developed by some governmental bodies and consequently not all institutions offer the opportunity of submitting public information requests online. A study conducted by Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) showed that the "practice of giving complete responses to public information requests is high" [7, p. 96]. However, another research displayed that relative to the period before the 2012 elections, when provision of public information to Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) was increased by 30 percent, these positive trends changed during the next reporting period (October 2013 to March 2014). As a result, the percentage of complete answers decreased by 14% and percentage of ignored requests was increased by 5% [13, p. 50].

One of the recent steps towards more open databases is that head of the Data Exchange Agency has discussed perspectives of developing a Georgian Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software that will enable digitalization of Georgian documents [17]. The structure of the Georgian government portal for public information, www.data.gov.ge, has been updated and today contains more than fifteen types of raw data (mostly in open XML and CSV formats). As the description of the website claims, at the preparatory stage governmental institutions assessed what kind of information, databases, preserved in the respective institutions could be published. Until now, 56 open data sets are available on the portal. Some examples of available data are: number of employees in the system of the Public Service Hall, number of clients at Public Service Hall daily, Gender data of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, procurements of the National Archive etc.

In such reality access to loads of public documents is ensured by an independent portal for public information www.opendata.ge, created by IDFI in 2010 and further developed in early 2014 after joining of three more Civil Society Organisations (Transparency International Georgia, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association and Green Alternative).

Such developments were reflected in the results of several international surveys about the level of availability of online governmental data. For instance, according to Global Open Data Index, out of 97 participating countries, Georgia took the 35th place in 2014 [8]. It received especially good assessment regarding accessibility of data on particular issues, such as pollutant emissions, company register, election results, national statistics, and government budget. Apart from this, another pilot international survey on governmental online transparency, evaluating and monitoring the existence of particular type of information on several official websites of public institutions in four countries (Belarus, Georgia, Russia, USA), demonstrated that in case of Georgia average openness rate amounted to 51.6% [14, p. 6]. Georgia was assessed with highest scores for providing relatively detailed and updated information about real estate owners, election results, legislative acts, state procurement, etc. However, the same report showed that availability of several important data (e.g. representative expenses, court decisions, taxes, etc.) still remains as a challenge for Georgia.

Furthermore, based on UN e-government survey, Georgia received a high assessment under the first parameter of the study, in particular, its developments in terms of e-information was evaluated by 88.89%, while its scores in the rest two parameters (e-consultation - 27.27%, e- decision-making

- 11.11%) can be regarded quite modest relative to the mentioned e-information component [24]. UN e-Government Survey also reports that even though the country does not have dedicated open government data portals, there are still many relevant databases implying that Georgia already has policies in place for centralizing and digitizing data and is ready to publish data in bulk and in open formats through dedicated portals.

To conclude, it can be claimed that Georgia has demonstrated significant advancement in terms of accessibility to public data on governmental spending and other related information through several initiatives. Despite such progress, both local and international surveys and studies revealed existing gaps in this direction, which needs proper attention from the Government. Nevertheless, it is also quite obvious that the citizen-informing component is much more developed relative to the other two.

3.4 Citizen-empowering policies

Georgia does not have any official governmental portal offering citizens opportunity to share their concerns and ideas with decision-makers, which will be reflected in public policy making. It is notable that within the framework of the already mentioned international initiative, Open Government Partnership (OGP) Georgia made commitment to launch web-site ichange.ge – a platform where citizens will be able to express their opinion, criticism or ideas. According to the action plan [19], a project team will work on this web-site to tackle the most discussed topics, identify major concerns and inform responsible authorities. Additionally, [Ichange.ge](http://ichange.ge) will enable the creation and submission of e-petitions. When an e-petition reaches a certain number of signatures (depending on the scale of the issue under question) authorities will be under the obligation to react. Several non-governmental organizations, like Institute for Development for Freedom of Information (IDFI), Transparency International Georgia (TIG), Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), JumpStart Georgia, provided the Government with recommendations and concept of this e-platform elaborated with the consideration of international practice. So far, the project has not been made operational yet. The Government of Georgia is expected to finish the implementation process until the end of 2015.

In the absence of the unified e-portal, devoted to citizen participation, several initiatives can be highlighted. First of all, several years ago Tbilisi City Hall established e-petition website - www.chemitbilisi.com, enabling citizens to initiate particular projects to tackle local problems. Nevertheless, several concerns and limitations of the platform were reported by civil society organizations: 1. administration of the website was not recording received, published, discussed and implemented initiatives (management problem); 2. criteria of determining the number of signatures to be selected for each petitions in order to be discussed by the local government representatives was not clearly stated (transparency problem); 3. only limited number of people were aware of the existing tool and consequently, very few number of people were publishing their petitions (promotion and civic activism problem); 4. only several initiatives were implemented by the government and most of them were initiated by Tbilisi City Hall itself (transparency problem). Later the local government decided to suspend the website. Nowadays, Tbilisi City Hall representatives are planning to modernize their official website and re-launch an updated version of e-petition portal.

When it comes to online initiatives from citizens dedicated to coping with local problems in Tbilisi, another website www.chemikucha.ge can be named. From the beginning it was created, promoted and managed by Transparency International Georgia (TIG), a nongovernmental organization in Georgia. Residents of several major cities could report local problems and request from the government to fix them in the near future. The project was quite successful and later, the representatives of the local governments of the respective cities were entitled to run the portal. As a

result, instead of TIG, they were responsible for providing the feedback to all users of the website. However, it turned out that governmental officials did not pay adequate attention to citizens' concerns. Hence, the level of responsiveness and effectiveness of the portal decreased. It shows that apart from public institutions, civil society representatives are sometimes authors of particular online discussion platforms, however insufficient commitment of the government hinders their successful implementation.

Another initiative proposed by civil society organizations is Civil Electronic Monitoring System (CEMS - <http://www.cems.ge/>). It is an electronic mechanism for building up direct consultations between self-government and local population. Nowadays, four big cities in Georgia - Rustavi, Gori, Kutaisi and Poti - are incorporated in the initiative. The online platform enables citizens to report information regarding various problems existing in their cities including, utility problems, self-governance projects, local bills, civil ideas and projects, petitions, regulations and rules etc. Afterwards, local-government representatives have possibility to look through the reported problems and resolve them. Until now, about 180 cases are published on the website.

With regard to activism of ordinary citizens, petitions, announcements and events regarding sensitive and societal issues shared and distributed via social networks and various online tools are noteworthy. Even though there is no governmental petition platform, through which online activists' appeals are directly submitted to the decision makers, they try to spread their demands with the help of alternative sources (for instance, through Google Docs, other websites created by different voluntary groups (change.org, www.secure.avaaz.org)).

In summary, on the one hand, government seems relatively hesitant to build up direct contact with citizens and offer them opportunity to engage in public policy making through modern technologies. On the other hand, gradual increase of citizens' activism has been witnessed in Georgia. However, it is also notable that their actions are mostly temporary, limited in scale and inconsistent.

4. Discussion

Based on the above-mentioned overview and the initial question – whether and to what extent development of smart cities leads to more democratic governance – the Georgian experience can provide valuable insights. We have theorized three categories of the framework: citizen-serving is attached to the idea of utilitarianism, citizen-informing is related to republican idea of government, while citizen-empowering can be attributed to participatory democracy. While we presented each as a separate category related to specific theoretical school, in reality all three are interconnected and even can be seen as step-by-step process. Thus, e-tools that only concentrate on citizen-serving are important but not sufficient condition for democracy, citizen-informing is crucial for achieving balance of power between the citizens and the government, however, only in case of effective citizen-empowering can one claim to have achieved democratic governance, based on more participation of the society and corresponding responsiveness from the authorities.

As the Georgian case shows, the government has made significant progress in terms of development of e-services, with improving effectiveness and efficiency of serving citizens in mind. By introducing one-stop shop e-services like my.gov.ge, the Georgian government is relatively good in terms of realizing need and importance of utilitarianism. In case of citizen-informing measures, despite considerable progress lately, such as new standard for proactive disclosure of information, compliance remains limited, inconsistent, and fragmented. This leads to conclusion that while the Georgian government has certain willingness for developing a republican view of democracy, and has made important steps towards this direction, it is still not ready to give up all powers in order to achieve true balance between civil society and the government. On the other hand, lack of political awareness by citizens, and lack of actively using information as a tool for

more democratic governance, which is limited to a number of organizations, remains an additional challenge for Georgia to become a more liberal democracy.

As for citizen-empowering measures in Georgia, there is lack of consistent policy from the government, as well as insufficient demand from society at large to take a more active role in policy-making processes. Despite pressure from civil society representatives, similar to citizen-informing measures, the government has been much more hesitant to take obligations, such as *ichange.ge*. The opportunities that existed (e.g. petitions website) lacked transparency and efficiency, and subsequently, ceased to function. While new initiatives on a local level are planned, exact scope and level of engagement from citizens remains unclear. In cases when citizens try to engage in policy-making via existing alternative tools, responsiveness from the government still remains low, as there is no direct obligation for them to react to citizen demands. Thus, the situation existing in Georgia is still far from the ideal when policy-decisions are informed by active communication with citizens (and can be seen as a result of what Arendt calls “judgment”) rather than one-way vision from the government. In other words, despite existing technological opportunities, participatory democracy is still to be achieved in Georgia. Thus, seeing citizen-serving, citizen-informing and citizen-empowering as three steps towards more responsive and democratic governance, we can claim that currently Georgia is in the middle – it is already past simple utilitarian idea of governance, but still has a lot to do in order to achieve truly participatory governance.

Based on the Georgian case, it is possible to theorize on a number of key factors impacting online services and the development of democratic governance: balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches, level of trust in institutions, e-literacy and cultural specificities. In case of citizen-serving, all services have been developed with the initiative from the authorities, as part of increasing efficient policy-making. So, this is rather a case of top-down policy-making. Many citizens do indeed benefit from more accessible governmental services, but this was not a result of demand from society; and already implemented services lack opportunities for feedback and subsequent improvement. The case with citizen-informing is quite different – many the changes undertaken by the government, e.g. proactive disclosure of public information, is result of continuous pressure from civil society representatives working on human rights and transparency issues. With citizen-empowering, there is lack of consistent policy from the government, as well as not sufficient demand from the society at large to take more active part in policy-making process.

Thus, in contrast with citizen-serving, where the government was actively providing reforms, or citizen-informing, when the civil society succeeded in advocating changes, citizen-empowering measures remain limited both in terms of bottom-up pressure and top-down reaction. Based on this, we argue that in order for e-services to lead to more democratic governance, there should be a balance between demand from grassroots and responsiveness from the authorities. If one of these two factors is weak, the process will either only be limited to improving policy delivery (e.g. decreasing administrative costs while serving to people), or undermine legitimacy of the authorities due to hesitation to follow demands. Another important factor in case of Georgia is general level of e-literacy, access to Internet and awareness. In the reality when less than half of population are connected to Internet, and most of them only use it for entertainment purposes, more efforts are needed both for infrastructure development and awareness raising on significance and available opportunities for more civic engagement.

Along with awareness, trust in political institutions is significant factor for ensuring participation of the society in policy-making. Lack of trust in political institutions, observed by nation-wide surveys (e.g. Caucasus Barometer) can be one of the serious challenges towards more active participation of citizens via online tools. Last but not least, merely introduction of formal online institutions is insufficient for achieving efficiency, if not based on relevant non-formal institutions as well as norms and values. In other words, relatively young tradition of civic activism and engagement in decision making process may be seen as additional factors why even top-down

readiness for e-service development is not sufficient condition for more democratic governance in Georgia.

5. Conclusion

We have shown that while there have been active developments in Georgia in terms of citizen-serving, compliance to demands for more citizen-informing measures are limited and citizen-empowering approaches remain to be developed. Thus, we can say that while recent development of e-services are an important step towards democratization, it is not sufficient for achieving more responsive governance. In order for e-services to bring on more transparent and participatory democracy, among other things there is need for balance between top-down and bottom-up relations, attention to level of awareness, legitimacy of political institutions and established values of civic activism.

While analysis of the Georgian case is important in order to better understand development of democratization in countries with less of a liberal legacy, it can also give valuable insights for the theoretical understanding of smart cities. Contrary to the general perception that modern technologies lead to more democratic governance, we claim that this will only be the case when all three categories – citizen-serving, citizen-informing and citizen-empowering – are equally developed. This finding affirms what Morosov and others have already uttered: digitization does not equal democratization. As the Georgian case clearly shows, there is more to e-democracy than development of Internet-based services.

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7. Appendix

List of Georgian e-Services mentioned in the paper						
Name	Initiator	Description	Link(s)	C.-servin g	C.-infor ming	C.-empe werin g
E-procurement	State Procurement Agency of Georgia	The website enables to look for tenders and see such details of procurements as supplier, proceeding status, attached documents etc.	http://procurement.gov.ge/index.php?sec_id=1&lang_id=ENG	X		
E-budget	Ministry of Finance	Allows to electronically manage central budget, budget of autonomous republics and self-governments	https://www.ebudget.ge/	X		
E-treasury	Ministry of Finance	Allows budget organizations to electronically submit documents, and manage budget sources, make payments etc.	https://www.etry.gov.ge/	X		
Electronic Debt Management System (EDMS)	Ministry of Finance	Collection of instruments necessary for managing internal and external debts	https://www.edms.ge/app/	X		
Human Resource Management System (e-HRMS)	Ministry of Finance	Database of civil servants	https://www.ehrms.ge/	X		
Electronic Revenue Service	Ministry of Finance	Electronic payment on treasury codes	http://www.rs.ge/EN/1340	X		
E-auction	Ministry of Finance	Enables to buy any asset from physical person or the state entity	https://www.eauction.ge/	X		
Legislative Herald of Georgia	Ministry of Justice	All legislative and normative documents in one web-site	www.matsne.gov.ge	X		
E-prescription	Ministry of Labour Health and Social Protection	Gives information about prescriptions to doctors, pharmacies, insurance companies and citizens	http://prescription.moh.gov.ge/Prescription/Default.aspx	X		
Registry Of Pharmacies	Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Protection	Allows to find information about pharmacies, medicaments, import & export of medicaments etc.	http://pharmacy.moh.gov.ge/Pages/Drugstore.aspx	X		
Digital Library	National Parliamentary Library of Georgia	Collection of Georgian digital libraries	http://www.nplg.gov.ge/geo/114/alias34/id56	X		
Environment-related services	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection	Weather forecast, natural disasters, pollution data, hydrological data	www.meteo.gov.ge	X		
Public Transportation Journey Planner*	Tbilisi Transport Company	Allows to plan a journey by public transportation, indicating location, destination etc.	http://transit.ttc.com.ge/?page=transit	X		
Public Transportation Timetable*	Tbilisi Transport Company	Routes of buses	http://transiten.ttc.com.ge/?page=schedule	X		
Buses in real time*	Tbilisi Transport Company	Online identification of buses in real time	http://transiten.ttc.com.ge/?page=live	X		
Mobile application for public transportation*	Tbilisi Transport Company	Application with e-services of Tbilisi Transport Company for Android smartphones	http://ttc.com.ge/?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=158	X		
Assets declarations of public officials	Civil Service Bureau	Information about incomes of senior officials	https://declaration.gov.ge/eng/	X		
Vacancies in Civil Service	Civil Service Bureau	Complete List of job openings in Georgian civil service with online applications, the only possible way to apply for a job in civil service	https://www.hr.gov.ge/eng/	X		

Civil registry	National Agency of Public Registry	Registries of business, tax information, political entities, municipalities, real estate etc.	http://napr.gov.ge/	X		
Voter registry	Election Administration of Georgia	Enables citizens to check their personal information and address	http://voters.cec.gov.ge/	X		
Preparation for driving license exam	Service Agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs	Online test of theory part in driving license exam	http://sagency.ge/index.php?m=341	X		
Car number plates	Service Agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs	Buying, booking car number plates etc.	http://sagency.ge/index.php	X		
Documentation for gun possession	Service Agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs	Receiving needed documentation for registering guns	http://sagency.ge/index.php?m=133	X		
E-services of public schools	Education Management Information System (EMIS), LEPL of the Ministry of Education and Science	e-catalogue of public schools, online registration of first graders, statistical data	http://catalog.edu.ge/index.php	X		
Declaration of tax-free minimum	Revenue Service	Information about reimbursement of the income tax (tax-free minimum)	http://www.rs.ge/5954	X		
Citizen's portal my.gov.ge	The Government of Georgia	Portal of more than 100 e-services from public and private sector, such as enrolling in higher education and/or applying for a study grant, looking for a job, retiring, applying for a driver's license (or renewing an existing one), buying, building or renovating a house, moving and changing address, declaring the birth of a child, changing marital status, etc.	www.my.gov.ge	X		
Open Data Portal	Data Exchange Agency of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia	Raw data of public institutions in machine-readable format	www.data.gov.ge		X	
Public Information Database	2010: Created by Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI); 2014: joined by Transparency International Georgia, Green Alternative and Georgian Young Lawyers' Association	Documents received in response to FOI requests sent to all public institutions	www.opendata.ge		X	
E-petition website* (not functioning anymore)	Tbilisi City Hall	The website used to enable citizens to initiate particular projects to tackle with local problem	www.chemitbilisi.com			X
Fix my street*	CSO Transparency International Georgia (TIG)	A portal for reporting about local problems to the City Hall	www.chemikucha.ge			X

* Only in Tbilisi