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LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION: INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

Abstract. This study examines an opportunity of decision-making local officials around the globe to increasing two-way interactions through usage of relevant online media channel, such as attractive websites, citizen-oriented social media, well-timed and addressed messages, focusing on the list of stakeholders. Moreover, paper outlines the results of analysis of current experience of most effective communication practices in United States, Europe and Asia, including OECD countries. Research also focused on most appropriate and implementable concept of best practice of local government, which consist informative, interaction, policymaking functions and help to involve citizens in public decision-making process. Thematic research issue will explore an effective role of media tools in introducing transparency and citizen trust in local government.

Key words: *Communication, public administration, local government, citizen engagement.*

Еркебұлан Құрымбай
ЖЕРГІЛІКТІ БИЛІК ОРГАНДАРЫМЕН БАЙЛАНЫС: ХАЛЫҚАРАЛЫҚ ШОЛУ

Аңдатпа. Бұл зерттеу бүкіл әлемдегі жергілікті шенеуніктер-дің қызықты веб-сайттар, азаматтарға бағытталған әлеуметтік желілер, мүдделі тараптардың тізіміне бағытталған уақтылы

және мекен-жай хабарламалары сияқты тиісті онлайн-медиа арналарды пайдалану арқылы екіжақты қарым-қатынасты кеңейту туралы шешім қабылдау мүмкіндігін қарастырады. Сонымен қатар, мақалада АҚШ, Еуропа және Азиядағы, оның ішінде ЭЫДҰ елдеріндегі тиімді коммуникациялық тәжірибелердің заманауи тәжірибесін талдау нәтижелері келтірілген. Зерттеу сонымен қатар ақпараттық, өзара әрекеттесетін, директивалық функциялардан тұратын және азаматтарды мемлекеттік шешімдер қабылдау процесіне тартуға көмектесетін жергілікті өзін-өзі басқарудың ең жақсы тәжірибесінің неғұрлым барабар және іске асырылатын тұжырымдамасына бағытталған. Тақырыптық зерттеу азаматтардың жергілікті өзін-өзі басқаруға ашықтығы мен сенімін қамтамасыз етудегі бұқаралық ақпарат құралдарының тиімді рөлін қарастыруға арналады.

Түйін сөздер: Коммуникация, мемлекеттік басқару, жергілікті өзін-өзі басқару, азаматтық белсенділік.

Еркебулан Курымбай

**КОММУНИКАЦИЯ С МЕСТНЫМИ ОРГАНАМИ ВЛАСТИ: МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ ОБЗОР**

Аннотация. В этом исследовании рассматривается возможность принятия решений местными чиновниками по всему миру для расширения двустороннего взаимодействия за счет использования соответствующих онлайн-медиа-каналов, таких как интересные веб-сайты, ориентированные на граждан социальные сети, своевременные и адресные сообщения, ориентированные на перечень заинтересованных сторон. Кроме того, в статье изложены результаты анализа современного опыта наиболее эффективных коммуникационных практик в США, Европе и Азии, включая страны ОЭСР. Исследование также было направлено на наиболее адекватную и реализуемую концепцию наилучшей практики местного самоуправления, которая заключается в информативных, взаимодействующих, директивных функциях и помогает вовлечь граждан в процесс принятия государственных решений. Тематическое исследование

будет посвящено изучению эффективной роли средств массовой информации в обеспечении прозрачности и доверия граждан к местному самоуправлению.

Ключевые слова: *Коммуникация, государственное управление, местное самоуправление, гражданская активность.*

Introduction

In fast-changing world officials required to develop new competencies in a public interaction area. Communication is vitally important, especially in in decision-making process at all levels. According to the Communicating Open the Government's 2018 Research 81% of voters think decisions made in secret are bad for democracy and 85% of voters agree that they have a right to know what the government is doing. Thus, this study going to raise reasonable questions: How the developed governments use communications? What best American, European and Asian practices of local government work effectively to impact the stakeholders? Author will answer to these questions, considering the tools of improving Citizen-Government interaction.
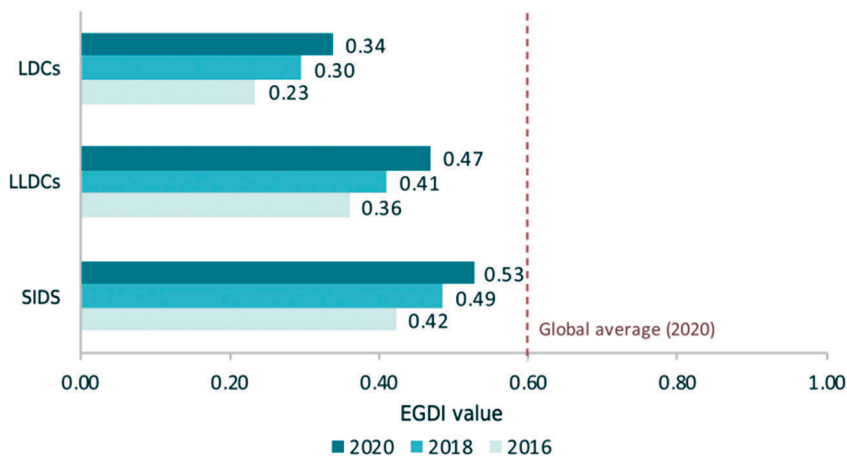
***Pic.1 Average EGDI for countries 2020****.*

Source: 2016,2018,2020 UN E-Government Surveys

One of the worldwide-known government measure methodologies is the United Nations E-Government Survey, conducted by the

UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and examines the development of digital government across all UN member states. To measure e-government readiness Survey Report uses EGDI (E-Government Development Index) on national level and LOSI (Local Online Service Index) on city level. In its turn, EGDI measures ICT infrastructure, human capital and online content and services, while LOSI based on four dimensions – technical features of city portals, content provision, online service provision and opportunities for public participation and engagement.

E-government development continues to advance, with the global average EGDI value increasing from 0.55 in 2018 to 0.60 in 2020 (Pic.1). Progress is evident even in countries in special situations and among those with limited resources. The number of least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS) with high and very high EGDI values (above 0.50) has increased by 29% [1].

Dividing by regions, Europe remains the leader, with the highest proportion of countries in the very high EGDI group (58%), followed by Asia (26%), the Americas (12%).
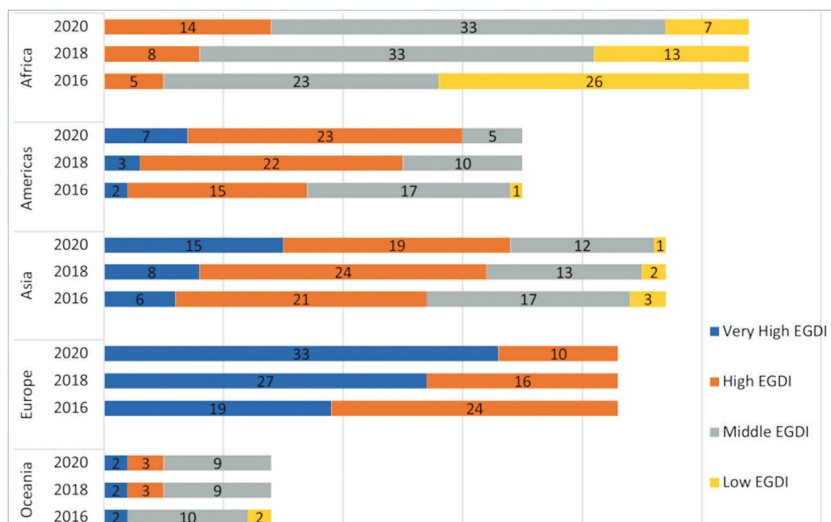

Pic.2 Regional distribution of countries by EGDI level, 2016, 2018 and 2020

Source: 2016,2018,2020 UN E-Government Surveys

Regarding to the 2020 Local Online Service Index, LOSI average is 0.43, which implies that most city portals are still offering very basic features. Among cities assessed in 2020, 14 have very high LOSI levels, the majority of cities are in the middle or low LOSI groups (pic.3).

Nowadays, local government communication is a rising priority in political agendas, but attention has been focused primarily on digital government transformation at the national level. Local communication merits attention as well because city administrations have more direct interaction with residents and are responsible for addressing concerns affecting people's daily lives. In some cases, local governments are implementing digitalization and creating "smart cities", using chatbots to improve service delivery, using big data and analytics to design and implement effective local government policies and to optimize urban public resources, using smart applications in health care, transport and emergency situations.
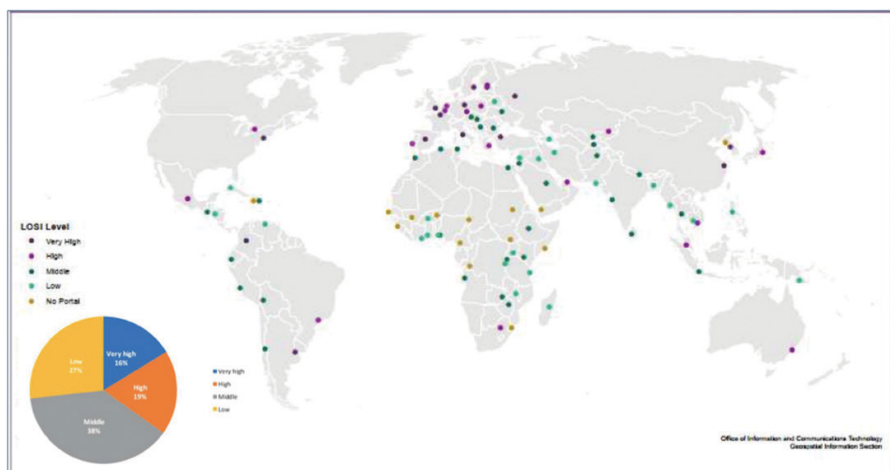
Pic.3 Distribution of the cities assessed based on LOSI level

The findings point to the need for a shared vision and increased collaboration at the local level. To the extent possible, city e-government projects should involve all relevant stakeholders, including citizens, neighborhoods, communities, local and international NGO's.

During the COVID-19 crisis, online communication has played a vital role in promoting the health and safety of people and in keeping

economies and societies working. Digital government technologies, through information sharing and online services provision, have kept Governments and people connected during the outbreak. Digital technologies have also enabled Governments to make rapid policy decisions based on real-time data and analytics, to enhance the capacities of local authorities for better coordination, and to deploy evidence-based services to those who need them most. Thus, digital tools have played a central role in addressing the crisis, becoming an essential element of communication, leadership and collaboration between policymakers and society during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the pandemic has shown how critical communication can be when appropriately leveraged for good governance, especially in difficult times. Governments both, local and nation, need to accelerate efforts to embrace technology, even when the crisis is over. The top priorities for local government authorities should be bringing people online and increasing their satisfaction.

Literature Review

International experience shows that government officials are interested in understanding and using social media as a communication channel (Mergel and Greeves 2013). However, Mergel argues that governments lack clear understanding of how social media and Internet can be used effective and how officials can gain a benefit from online communications.

The United Nations (2002) defined e-government as a system of government "utilizing the Internet and the world-wide-web for delivering government information and services to citizens" (p. 1). The United Nations further classified the government's online services into the following four categories: emerging information services, enhanced information services, transactional services and connected services. Emerging and enhanced information services refer to the delivery of government information to the citizens through various online channels. Emerging information services address basic government information on services, policies, regulations, and laws (e.g., service hours, announcements, and website addresses), whereas enhanced information services involve the use of more sophisticated formats and techniques, such as video clips, downloadable files, and statistics. Connected services involve a two-way communication between the

government and citizens in the administrative process and often make use of online surveys, one-to-one interviews, and e-petitions.[1]

Meanwhile, Searson and Johnson emphasized the advantage of advanced functions of government websites that can facilitate a two-way communication between the government and citizens and thus promote transparency, usability, and interactivity. The enhanced interactivity and usability of government websites supported by advanced technologies go beyond the simple provision of government information. For example, highly sophisticated interactivity can be established by tools, such as blogs, forums, online petitions, polls, and surveys, whereas providing only contact information (e.g., e-mail addresses and telephone numbers) illustrates low interactivity. Similarly, Welch and Hinnant (2003) identified transparency and interactivity as two major components of government websites. They suggested that transparency is achieved primarily by information dissemination and that interactivity is ensured by being open and responsive to citizens' input. Meanwhile, OECD identifies 4 key principles of open government: transparency, integrity, accountability and stakeholder participation in support of democracy and inclusive growth.

According to OECD, the primary objective for governments is to improve communications, followed by stakeholder engagement and service delivery improvements. Figure below illustrates that social media are as of today still mainly regarded as means to diffuse information and only secondary to improve consultation or even active participation as part of citizen-government approach.
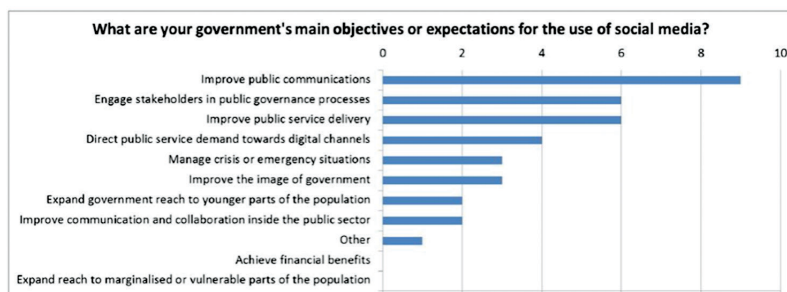
Source: OECD

Citizens have a significant function in decision making process

[1] Hyehyun Hong, 2012, Government websites and social media's influence on government-public relationships

and have the right to determine what is relevant to them (Popescu-Ljungholm, 2015a). In it turns, public managers should further greater citizen participation in the activity of government. Unfortunately, in most government agencies and authorities use social media tools solely and websites only for self-branding and visibility, rather than interaction, citizen-oriented transparency and accountability. This self-branding communication practice by officials undermines the trust of stakeholders such as citizens, business and non-government organizations. On the other hand, some individuals find out current public communication more optimistic, because implementation of social media activities by government looks unusual for people of the Soviet period. However, case studies from the US demonstrate that government agencies still mainly work along the traditional models of communication even when using virtual media[2] (Brainard & McNutt, 2010). Meanwhile, Searson and Johnson (2010) emphasized the advantage of advanced functions of government websites that can facilitate a two-way communication between the government and citizens and thus promote transparency, usability, and interactivity.

The enhanced interactivity and usability of government websites supported by advanced technologies go beyond the simple provision of government information. For example, highly sophisticated interactivity can be established by tools, such as blogs, forums, online petitions, polls, and surveys, whereas providing only contact information (e.g., e-mail addresses and telephone numbers) illustrates low interactivity. Similarly, Welch and Hinnant identified transparency and interactivity as two major components of government websites. They suggested that transparency is achieved primarily by information dissemination and that interactivity is ensured by being open and responsive to citizens' input.

Scholars confirm there are two main points of public engagements on social media should looks like. First, focusing on citizens participation in policy process, e-consultation (Clarke 2012; McNutt 2014; Longo 2017). Second – public service delivery (e.g. Mergel 2012; Small 2012, Roy 2017). Some researchers investigate the relationship between government and citizens' trust through social

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[2] Hyehyun Hong, 2012, Government websites and social media's influence on government-public relationships

media interaction (Nam 2012; Song and Lee 2016), whereas others note lack of interest of incorporating stakeholders' feedback in decision-making (McNutt 2014) and favoring from top to down communication approach.

Social media platforms present an emerging area of citizen-initiated contacts with government. In the context of the public sector, social media can be defined as a group of technologies that allow public agencies to create greater citizen engagement (Criado, Sandoval-Almazan, & Gil-Garcia, 2013). When government uses social media platforms there are opportunities for democratic participation, coproduction, and crowdsourcing solutions and innovations (Bertot et al., 2012, Linders, 2012). Social media tools can provide for improvements in government transparency, policy-making, public service delivery, and knowledge management (Bonsón et al., 2012, Kavanaugh et al., 2012).

Overall, social media can be a great opportunity for government agencies to answer any questions the public might have.[3]

1.1. United States of America

New York City 311 ✔
@nyc311

Has my street been plowed yet? How long ago was that?

No need to wonder! @NYCSanitation lets you track the street-level progress of snow clearing operations throughout the five boroughs with #PlowNYC.

See more: on.nyc.gov/SnowOnStreet —> Tracking
Перевести твит

SEE SNOW CLEARING OPERATIONS WITH **PlowNYC**

New York City 311 ✔
@nyc311

.@NYCDHS's Code Blue is in effect until tomorrow, Friday, March 5 at 8:00 AM. If you see a homeless person outside in these frigid temperatures, please call us at 311.
Перевести твит

CODE BLUE

Code Blue procedures are in effect until tomorrow at 8:00 AM. Please call us at 311 to request homeless person assistance.

Most of American cities use different social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. According to the International City Manager's Association, in the United States two thirds of counties and municipalities had an official social media

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[3] Christopher G.Reddick, Akemi Takeoka Chatfield, Adegboyega Ojo, 2016, A social media text analytics framework for double-loop learning for citizen-centric public services: A case study of a local government Facebook use.

presence as early as 2011. Facebook is the preferred channel with over 90%, followed by Twitter with around 70% and blogs, which were used by around 20% of US local authorities [2].

Local authorities understand that social media isn't just a good way to share fun pictures or work hours schedule. It can also be a very powerful way for government agencies to interact with the public and business. The value and importance of social media are being recognized by the public, and organizations at all levels, including local governments, are also recognizing the positive benefits of social media, such as crisis communication, citizen engagement, build public trust and educate target groups with meaningful content. Also, social media can be a great opportunity for government agencies to answer any questions the public might have.

Remembering that, city, county and town governments across Unites States have accounts on social media, such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. For instance, Mayor of New York City deliver his messages in Twitter about COVID-19 during pandemic on daily basis. The content concerns important tips, reminders and advices in this hard time. Municipal services such as Fire, Police, Health Departments and 311 Non-emergency government service also use social platforms with community-centered content. Moreover, all this departments write in English and non-English majority-used languages [3].

Regarding to offline type of communication and citizen engagement, it is mattered to highlight the experience of City of Syracuse, NY. The Mayor invites residents to Monday Mile Walk, which take place on weekly basis. The meeting schedule is available on the Office of Mayor

web site and every member of community can join him and discuss. During this walking Mayor pays attention on people's complaints, discovers ideas and responses from citizen. This experience is most likely way among residents to reach the local officials and be heard by authorities.

Another communication practice implemented in U.S. small towns and counties is creating a neighborhood liaisons institute. The general idea of this engagement is in two-way willingness exchange and dialog between local administration and concentrated neighborhoods, including homeowner's association.

1.2. Europe

While United States use social media widely, most of EU local governments use mobile applications besides social network as well as Artificial Intelligence (AI) techniques have been extensively used to support and enhance the quality of decision making and problem solving in different industries.

Using virtual chatbots as the first point of contact, local agencies all over Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland have made life easier for millions of people. Connected citizens now enjoy instant answers to questions about public services. Public servants are liberated from spending hours on repetitive work and can focus their attention on delivering a personalized and high-level service experience.

Admittedly, the most rising AI trend in the private sector nowadays concerns the utilization of applications that interact with users in a

conversational format and mimic human conversation, known as "conversational agents", "chatbots" or simply "bots" (Abu Shawar & Atwell, 2007; Klopfenstein, Delpriori, Malatini, & Bogliolo, 2017; Poola, 2017)[4]. A recent study by Harvard identifies five types of chatbots' uses cases in the public sector (Mehr, 2017), namely: (i) answering citizens' questions, complaints and inquiries through automated AI-based customer support systems, (ii) searching in documents (including legal ones) and providing guidelines to citizens on filling forms, (iii) getting citizens' input and routing them to the responsible public administration office, (iv) translating governmental information, and (v) drafting documents with answers to citizens' questions. One of the major advantages of these virtual assistants is that they embed "supervised learning" algorithms, allowing them to continuously learn from their interactions with humans and improve the accuracy of the responses they provide [3].

One of the chatbots implemented in United Kingdom public sector is TravelBot - an AI-powered Facebook messenger chatbot application launched by the Travel For London (TFL) government agency in 2017. This messenger bot is intended to deliver help the people with services like bus arrivals, route status, service updates(bus/rail), maps, and even allot a human an agent if a customer like to get in further details[5].
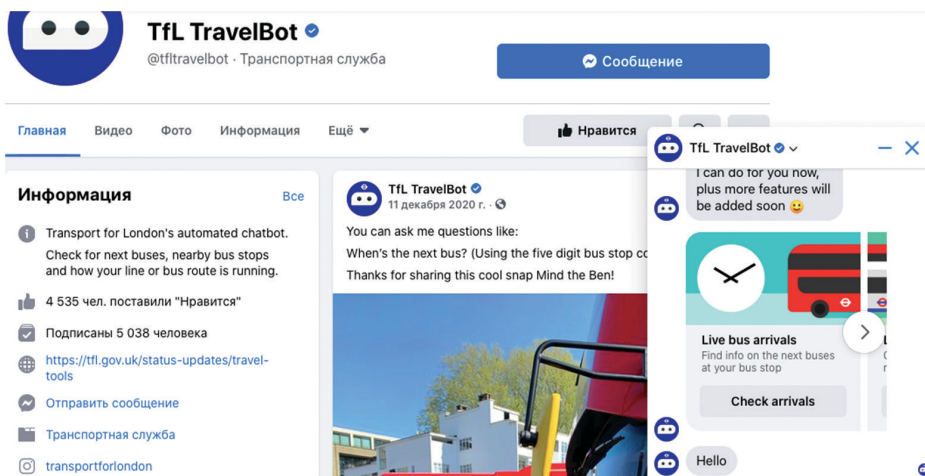
Another chatbot was launched in Vienna in 2017, which was designed to answer to FAQ's people ask. Now, WienBot can answer in more understandable way to around 350 different questions and public services the city provided [4].

Most chatbots are well designed to help citizens navigate through web-sites with lots of information or conduct transactions. The potential of chatbots is significantly improving the citizen experience and engagement and enabling a new form of decision-making process.

Participatory budgeting can be broadly defined as a way of including the citizens in the decision making process of the city budget. It can imply, in some cities, a whole administrative structure feeding on grassroots democracy, which defines budget priorities for the local neighbourhood or district. In other cases the city allocates part of the budget to projects which are decided by the citizens: the citizens can suggest projects, and then they can vote in their favourite ones[6].

Since it was invented in Porto Alegre (Brazil), it spread first in Latin America, where probably more than 1,000 among the 16,000 municipalities had introduced it by 2006 (Cabannes, 2006), and then over the entire globe. Participatory budgets emerged simultaneously in seven, mainly Western, European countries. Procedures are currently

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[6]It was created in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in the late 80's, in a conjunction of both top-down and bottom-up processes

underway or are at a preliminary stage in four further countries. Altogether, in 2008, there are more than 100 European cities with a participatory budget. Among them are large cities, such as Seville in Spain, which has more than 700,000 residents and districts of the capital cities of Paris, Rome, Lisbon and Berlin (a first attempt was also made in 2005 in London). However, medium-sized cities, such as Hilden and Emsdetten in Germany, and small communes, such as Grottamare or Altidona in Italy, have also adopted the procedure. Moreover, the local state's capacity to implement specific, citizen- selected projects then influences public budgeting's long-term sustainability.

1.3. Asia

This paragraph discovering the features of social media on citizen engagement in two different Asian countries: Japan and South Korea.

Japan

Historically, Japanese have a huge demand on public service due to the situating in the earthquake-active zone. In 2000's Japanese local governments have implemented social networking services (SNS systems), such as Twitter and Facebook, which create opportunities for citizens to participate in democratic processes.

In the immediate aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake that occurred in 2011, voice communication through normal telephone lines was difficult in affected areas due to the initial congestion caused by the sudden increase of calls. As is natural in many disaster-related situations, many people became alarmed and nervous, needing reassurance that their loved ones were safe. Some needed to convey delays or cancellations due to transportation disruptions. In contrast to fixed telephone lines, Internet access through mobile devices was found to be relatively robust and resilient in comparison to the normal telecommunication channels [5].

One significant experience took place in Takeo city, which has switched from using traditional websites to featuring its Facebook page as its main Internet source, while majority of Japanese public servants had to use Twitter accounts and has been encouraged by local administration to post tweets about their work process and explanation public service delivery. The local prefecture's objective was to

promote the flow of ordinary information from the government so that citizens could feel closer to their municipality. During the flooding that occurred in the Takeo area on June 12, 2011, the mayor and other workers continued sending out disaster information about roadblocks and flooding. Their success in using Twitter evolved into tactics for further enhancing visualization of the workings of the municipal government.

Another case known as "Cyber Square" - a Facebook page managed by a local government in Japan that has over 2000 followers including various civil society organizations and individuals that are oriented towards civic activities. Project has began by the Tsukuba municipal government as an experiment to promote cooperation among citizens by creating a new perspective among citizens through social media and help promote networking among civic activities and groups. This cyber-square was initiated to create a foundation for information sharing and help visualize civic activities for enhancing civil society within the city. Prior to commencing this experiment, Tsukuba city had the highest number of Facebook users in Ibaraki with approximately 10,860 users in October 2011 [6].

South Korea

Due to the high rates of internet users, household internet distribution and computer possession and level of establishment of online government infrastructure, Korea is one of the leading countries in terms of online governance in the world. According to the United Nation E-Government Survey South Korea belongs to the leading countries in the world in 2020. Moreover, South Korea is the global leader in online services provision (OSI) and is the top EGDI performer (0.956) in Asia, followed by Singapore and Japan.

Regarding that, citizens in South Korea have opportunities to participate in government in various ways other than voting. Local Autonomy Act (LAA) has undertaken extensive institutional measures to open local governments to public scrutiny and to stimulate public input. Citizens can participate in the administration of local governments through various institutional mechanisms such as resident petition and proposals, resident request for audit and anticorruption investigation, residents' lawsuit, referendum, and recall through

E-People multifunctional portal. The key characteristic shared by these institutional measures is that they are actions initiated by citizens [3]. These measures have positive effects on local democracy at least in two aspects. Firstly, they enable government and the citizenry to exchange information, and thus contribute to the growing capacity of local governments. Secondly, they may alter resource allocations and political power patterns[7].
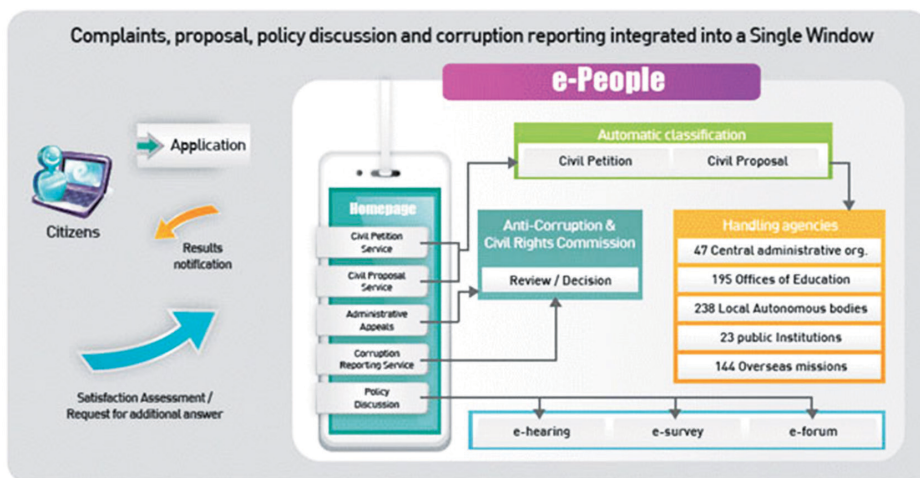
Next effective citizen-engaged mechanism in Korea is a participatory budget, which has existed for more than 30 years at the municipal level. The local participatory budget system currently used by municipal governments nationwide by eliciting proposals that require funding by the central Government. The portal includes a comprehensive timeline for the process, which combines online and offline activities.

Regarding to the local government, one of the best practices initiated by the mayor of Gangnam-gu during his first term was to promote government transparency for citizens, via an electronic and web-based system, known as the e-democracy type applications. Weekly cabinet meetings were broadcast over the web, a form of one-way communication from government to citizen, while e-mail and bulletin board-type services provided two-way communications [7].

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[7] Local Government and Public Administration in Korea, OECD

Results

The local government's active online communication with the public and other stakeholders can mainly be explained by the following reasons.

First, online-based media enable to manage citizen engagement and people's way of thinking.

Second, online platforms such as official web-portals, accounts on social media increase transparent of the local government's communication process and promote its accessibility and accountability. As a result of open communication, local governments are required to use effective tools and resources, such as social networking systems, participatory budget to hear responses from residents, solve a local issues together and share important information for the people.

Third, online ccommunication channels are increasingly becoming a kind of virtual space for public participation in political life. Thereby, online mechanisms, government can engage public participation to make difficult decisions and tackle serious issues through effective new approaches.

Proposal

Social media might be used by state bodies as a main tool to reach own objectives.

Firstly, using social media to better research local community and residents need. Secondly, to respond to opinions, reflect the concerns of various types of stakeholders, spread messages and better information sharing. Thirdly, get most enthusiastic citizen to become advocates of local government and fostering engagement with the whole community. Fourthly, support residents, local businesses or help them to support each other and public service delivery.

Finally, integrate residents into the way local government works and improving two-way collaboration through citizen-centric communication.

As a finding of the article, author demonstrates the best practices for local government communications in social media:

1. Identify the online and offline channels different target groups of local audience want to use to receive and send communications.

2. Use communication tools to how public, NGO's feedback impacts on city changes and the decision-making process.

3. Work with peoples with disabilities to design policy for special needs groups.

4. Survey local citizens regularly to identify a new problems and threats. The results of survey must be demonstrated among all population, as a part of local administration's communication plan to share vision about future changes, based on resident's feedback. It will also highlight engaging public in policymaking process.

5. Show how City administration works through valuable content on social media and let residents making sure politicians are playing by the same rules as regular people.

6. Use an informal events and activities to reach a different target groups will help to build a trust in local government.

7. Develop a good relationship with traditional media.

8. Implement a participatory budget to realize a resident's ideas as a path to solve domestic issues.

9. Invest in online and offline collaborative relationships with stakeholders about increasing number of public goods.

10. Inform and educate residents about local government.

In conclusion, local governments have to create own Do's and Don'ts framework, which will help them to build a trust in administration, rise transparency and accountability in community city managers work for.

Do	Don't
Do talk about local authorities "playing by the same rules" as a citizen during each meeting with residents	Don't forget that people tend to have a crisis of trust in local state bodies
Do focus on transparency	Don't let the information vacuum take place in society
Do engage people in policymaking and decision-making processes	Don't avoid contacting with residents, despite complex issues they speak about
Do follow the rule that local government will do what it says	Don't ignore people's needs
Do respect your citizen and the City	Don't afraid to admit own mistakes

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