E-Governance

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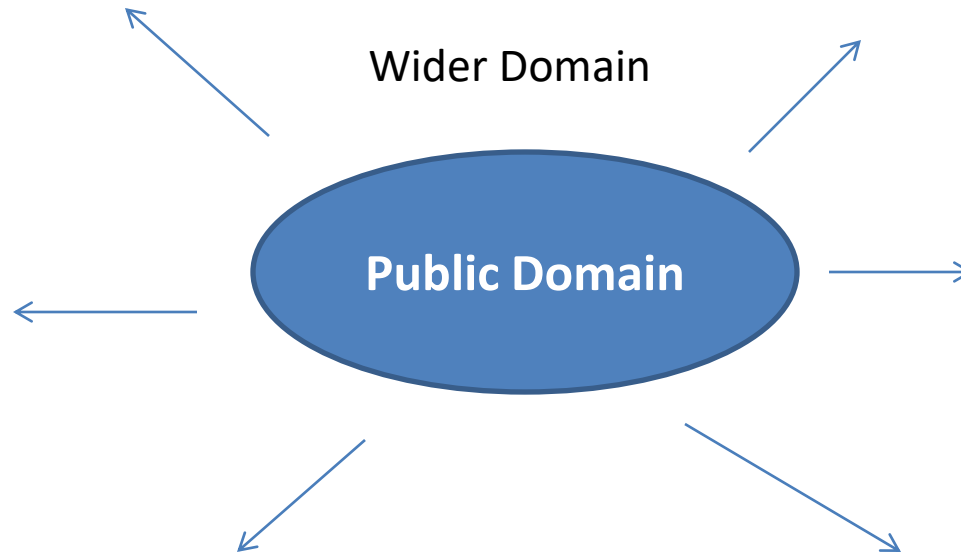
Models of Digital Governance

- Still evolving in developing countries

- Models are based on the inherent characteristics of ICT such as enabling equal access to information to anyone who is a part of the digital network and de-concentration of information across the entire digital network, connecting all sources of information.

- Information does not reside on any particular node but flows equally across all the nodes in the Digital Governance Model.

- Does not embed the common hierarchical information flow model that leads to the unequal distribution of information and hence skewed power relations.

- Hierarchy is inherent in the government departments where equity based information flow may not always be compatible with government functioning.

- Hence, appropriate administrative reforms and some reengineering is required before the real implementation of e-governance

- Models of e-governance are fundamentally different in developing and developed countries due to differences in basic conditions and perspectives and expectations from good governance.

Models of E-Governance in developing countries:

- Broadcasting / Wider Dissemination Model
- Critical Flow Model
- Comparative Analysis Model
- Mobilization and Lobbying Model
- Interactive Service Model

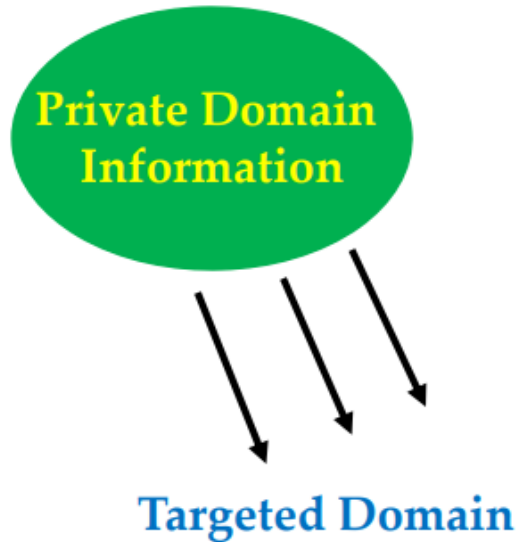# Broadcasting / Wider Dissemination Model

Wider Domain

Public Domain

- Dissemination of information that is already in the public domain through use of ICT and convergent media to make citizens more informed so that they can better understand governance mechanisms, empower them to make informed choices and exercise its rights and responsibilities
- Allows people to access information as well as validate information available in local domain from external sources. As a result, it gradually corrects the situation of information failure

- **Applications**
  1. Putting government laws and legislations online
  2. Making available the names, contact addresses, e-mails and fax numbers of local government officials online
  3. Making available key information pertaining to governmental plans, budgets, expenditures and performances online.
  4. Putting key court judgments / judicial statements that are of value to common citizens and creating a precedence for future actions online, through key environment related judgments, State vs. Citizen court rulings etc
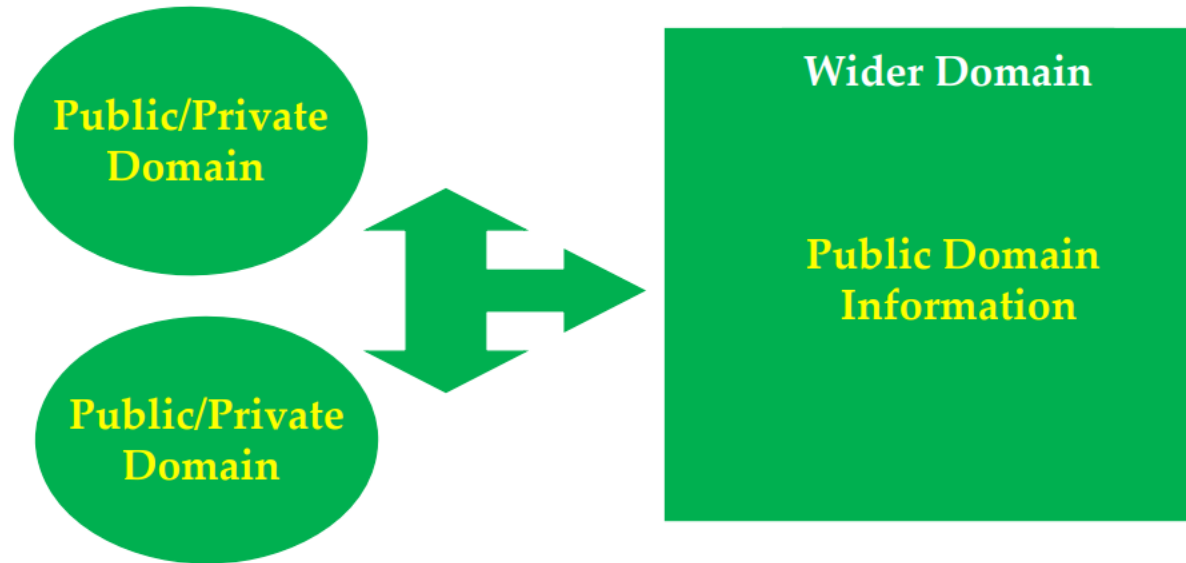
Critical Flow Model

Private Domain Information

- Corruption Information
- Company's Green Ratings
- Human Rights Violations
- Scientific Research

Targeted Domain

- Based on channeling information of critical value to a targeted audience
- Making available research studies, enquiry reports and appraisals commissioned by government to affected parties
- Making human rights violation and criminal accusation records against government officials available to NGOs and concerned citizens
- Making environment related information to local authorities.

- **Evaluation (Pros And Cons)**
  - This model is more directed in terms of its information content and its intended users. By focusing on the critical aspect of information, it exposes the weakest aspects of governance and decision-making mechanisms.

  - It informs people about specific cases of state-failure and bad-governance to build up a case for concerted action. At the same time, by fuelling public unrest, the model exerts pressure on the concerned government institutions and individuals to take into notice the interest and opinion of the masses in decision- making processes.

  - The responsibility of creating such models may lie more with the civil society organizations to emerge as an effective watch guard to government policies and actions. The government by itself may not have sufficient incentive and an attitude towards sharing such information.

  - The model will not work in cases where government mechanisms do not foster public debates and censure (criticize) all information of critical nature.

  - It will also fail where the government maintains a tight control over all information and it remains restricted to top few levels of the government.
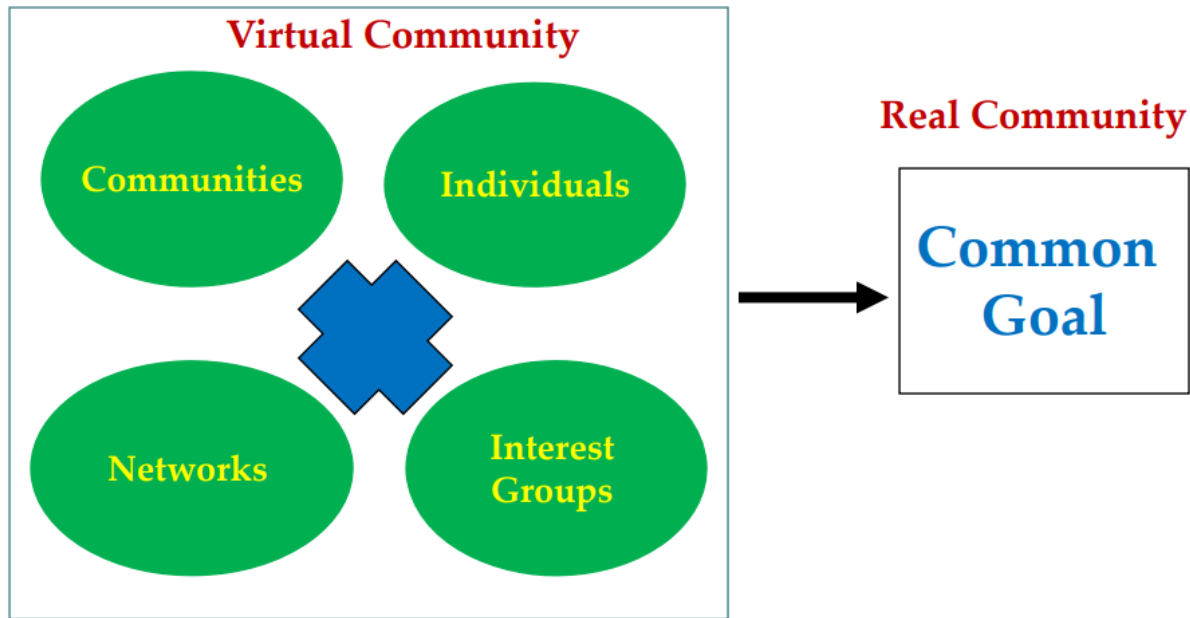
Comparative Analysis Model

- Exploring information available in public or private domain and comparing it with actual known information
- This model can be used to set benchmarks, influence or advocate changes in current governance policies and actions.
- It enables informed decision making at all levels by enhancing background knowledge
- Comparison could be made over time scale to get snapshot of past and present situation
- It can be used to evaluating the performance record of particular government official or ministry or department.

- **Evaluation (Pros And Cons)**
  - Developing countries can effectively use this model to their advantage as ICT opens access to global and local knowledge products at a relatively low cost.

  - Watch guard organizations and monitor-groups could use the model to track the performance records of electoral candidates and share them in their constituency.

  - The model is however reliant on the availability of comparative information sets and the ability of users to analyze and bring out strong arguments or self-explanatory graphics from the analysis.

  - The model becomes ineffective in absence of a strong civil society interest and short public memory.

Mobilization and Lobbying Model

- One of the most frequently used e-governance model
- Based on planned, strategic flow of information to build strong virtual allies to strengthen action in real world.
- Takes proactive approach of forming virtual communities which share similar values and concerns, promoting active sharing of information between these communities and linking them with real world activities.
- Able to effectively overcome geographical, institutional and bureaucratic barriers to shape concerned action.

- **Applications**
  1. Fostering public debates on global issues, themes of upcoming conferences, treaties etc.

  2. Formation of pressure groups to pressurize decision-makers to take their common concerns into cognizance (knowledge/awareness).

  3. Amplifying the voices of marginalized groups who are traditionally marginalized from decision-making process.

  4. Building up wider participation in decision-making processes.

  5. Building up global expertise on a particular theme in absence of localized information to aid decision-making.

- **Evaluation (Pros and Cons)**
  - The model has grown tremendously since the onset of debates for the Seattle round of World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1999 when it saw the formation of several virtual communities to advocate the concerns of developing countries in the WTO agreement.
  - The display of a unified civil society force at Seattle was in many ways a result of intensive discussions that took place over virtual networks months prior to the summit. The discussions taking place over the virtual network fed into regional level action plans that built into the global movement.
  - The mobilization and lobbying model enhances the scope of participation of individuals and communities in policy issues and debates.
  - The model also creates an effective deterrent (restriction) for government bodies and
  - individuals to be watchful in their actions lest they turn the opinion of local and global community against them. This model could be effectively used by the Government to encourage public debates and to gauge public opinion on a particular issue as a part of good governance strategies.

Interactive-Service Model (G2C2G)

- Principle
  - Interactive-Service model in many ways is a consolidation of the earlier digital governance models and opens up avenues for direct participation of individuals in the governance processes. ICT as mentioned earlier have the potential to include every individual within a knowledge network and enable interactive communication channels among them. This model fully captures the potential of ICT and leveraged it for greater participation, efficiency and transparency in functioning of the government as well as savings in time and costs relating to decision-making.

  - The Interactive-Service Model makes possible the various services offered by the Government to be directly accessible to the citizens. It creates an interactive Government to Consumer to Government (G2C2G) channel in various functions such as election of government officials (e-ballots); filing of tax returns, procurement of government services, sharing of concerns and providing expertise; conducting opinion polls on public issues, and grievance redressal (Complaint Addressing).

- **Applications**

1. Establishing an interactive communication channel with policy-makers such as video-conferencing and online dialoguing.

2. Conducting electronic ballots for the election of government officials and other office bearers.

3. Conducting public debates / opinion polls on issues of wider concern before formulation of policies and legislative frameworks.

4. Filing of grievances, feedback and reports by citizens with the concerned governmental body.

5. Performing governance functions online such as revenue collection, filing of taxes, governmental procurement, payment transfers etc.

6. Carrying out video-conferencing, on-line discussion with policy makers.

Evaluation (Pros And Cons)

- This model is more embedded in developed countries and has often been proposed for replication in developing countries. Such forms of solution-transfers may not be very effective.

- The model is on the higher end of technology-reliance as compared to the other models. This makes it difficult to replicate in developing countries in absence of individual and secure ICT access.

To Be Continued…