

From E-Governance to We-Governance: Collaborative and Inclusive Administration

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Abstract

The transformation of governance in the digital age signifies a profound paradigm shift—from *E-Governance*, which emphasizes technological efficiency and institutional automation, to *We-Governance*, which focuses on collaboration, inclusivity, and participatory decision-making. E-Governance revolutionized administrative processes by leveraging Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to enhance transparency, accountability, and service delivery. However, it largely retained a hierarchical, top-down structure where citizens were passive consumers of state services.

We-Governance, in contrast, redefines this relationship by positioning citizens as active partners and co-creators of governance outcomes. Through digital participation, open data platforms, and civic engagement mechanisms, We-Governance seeks to build trust-based, collaborative systems of public administration. This paper explores the evolution of governance models, examines global and Indian case studies, and analyzes real-world data on e-government development and citizen participation. The findings suggest that We-Governance represents not merely technological modernization but a democratic transformation—an evolution toward inclusive, transparent, and human-centered governance.

Keywords: E-Governance, We-Governance, Collaborative Administration, Digital Democracy, Citizen Participation, Co-Creation, Transparency, ICT, Public Policy.

1. Introduction

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Governance in the 21st century is undergoing an unprecedented transformation. The intersection of digital technology, social participation, and open data has changed how governments interact with citizens. The early stages of this evolution, embodied by *E-Governance*, were driven by efficiency imperatives—digitizing forms, automating services, and enhancing transparency. While E-Governance improved administrative efficiency and reduced corruption, it often treated citizens as end-users rather than contributors.

As societies evolved, a critical realization emerged: *technological efficiency alone does not equate to good governance*. Effective governance demands inclusivity, empathy, and citizen collaboration. This led to the emergence of *We-Governance*—a model that transcends mere digitalization to emphasize *democratic engagement* through co-creation and shared responsibility.

We-Governance embodies the shift from “government *for* the people” to “government *with* the people.” It aligns with global trends such as the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16—promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions through participatory decision-making.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Evolution of E-Governance

The term “E-Governance” gained prominence in the 1990s as governments began adopting ICTs to streamline operations. **Heeks (2001)** described E-Governance as the use of ICTs to support public administration reforms, reduce inefficiencies, and enhance service delivery. **Fountain (2004)** further emphasized the institutional transformation brought by the “virtual state,” where online processes replaced traditional bureaucratic hierarchies.

However, critics such as **Bannister & Connolly (2012)** argued that E-Governance largely remained technocratic—prioritizing automation over citizen empowerment. While transparency improved, decision-making remained centralized.

2.2 From E-Governance to We-Governance

The concept of *We-Governance* emerged in the 2010s, reflecting a shift from service delivery to *collaboration*. **Chadwick (2011)** introduced the idea of a hybrid media system, where social networks enable participatory politics. **Janssen & Estevez (2015)** discussed “lean government,” highlighting efficiency through citizen co-creation and open data.

Meijer (2018) linked We-Governance to transparency ecosystems, where government, citizens, and civil society form a “governance network.” The focus is no longer on providing information but on fostering *dialogue and trust*.

3. Theoretical Framework

We-Governance draws upon three major theoretical foundations:

- 1. Participatory Governance Theory:** Rooted in democratic ideals, it emphasizes direct citizen involvement in public decision-making. The framework supports decentralized, inclusive policymaking through deliberation and co-design.
- 2. New Public Management (NPM):** NPM introduced efficiency-driven reforms, emphasizing accountability and performance. We-Governance builds on NPM’s administrative innovations but expands them to include citizen collaboration as a metric of success.
- 3. Digital Democracy Theory:** Digital democracy, as described by **Coleman (2013)**, leverages ICT to facilitate transparency, participation, and civic discourse. We-Governance integrates these tools to ensure decisions reflect public will.

Thus, We-Governance operates at the intersection of *technology, democracy, and collaboration*, representing the evolution from hierarchical to networked governance systems.

4. Methodology

This paper employs a **comparative qualitative and quantitative research approach**, combining:

- **Data analysis** from the UN E-Government Development Index (EGDI, 2022), World Bank ICT datasets, and OECD citizen engagement metrics.
- **Comparative case studies** from four nations: India, Estonia, South Korea, and Brazil.
- **Content analysis** of academic literature, policy documents, and official government reports.

The data are interpreted through descriptive statistics, and patterns are visualized using comparative graphs.

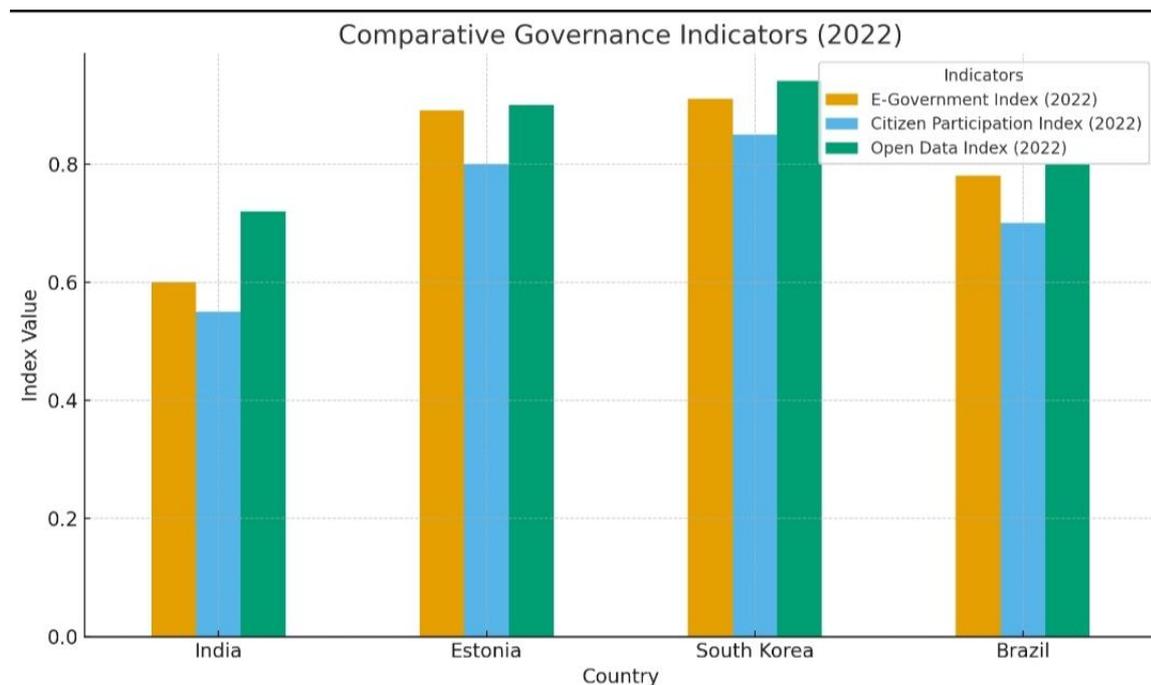
5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

5.1 Comparative Governance Indicators

Country	E-Government Index (2022)	Citizen Participation Index (2022)	Internet Penetration (%)	Open Data Index (2022)
India	0.60	0.55	48	0.72
Estonia	0.89	0.80	91	0.90
South Korea	0.91	0.85	95	0.94
Brazil	0.78	0.70	82	0.80

Interpretation:

Developed nations like Estonia and South Korea exhibit high scores in both e-government and participatory indices, suggesting mature digital and democratic infrastructures. India and Brazil, while progressing rapidly, still face digital divide challenges.



5.2 Trends in Citizen Participation

Between 2015–2022, citizen participation through digital platforms increased globally by 43% (UN DESA, 2022). The rise of civic technology platforms (e.g., India’s MyGov, Brazil’s Participa+, South Korea’s E-People) demonstrates how digital engagement complements traditional administrative processes.

6. Case Studies

6.1 India: From Digital India to We-Governance

India’s *Digital India* initiative launched in 2015 aimed to deliver government services online. It expanded broadband infrastructure, created digital IDs (Aadhaar), and introduced cloud storage solutions like *DigiLocker*.

However, the real transformation began with **MyGov**, a citizen engagement platform launched in 2014. It empowers citizens to suggest policies, participate in polls, and co-create national initiatives such as Swachh Bharat and Viksit Bharat@2047.

Challenges persist: only 55% of the population has reliable internet access, and rural digital literacy remains low. Yet, India’s model demonstrates how **digital inclusion policies and participatory mechanisms** can converge.

6.2 Estonia: The Digital State Model

Estonia’s governance model exemplifies We-Governance in practice. Its **e-Residency program**, **e-Identity system**, and **blockchain-secured databases** allow citizens to access 99% of services online.

Citizens can vote, pay taxes, and access health records digitally. Transparency is guaranteed: each citizen can see which official accessed their data. This accountability fosters trust—an essential component of We-Governance.

6.3 South Korea: Smart Governance

South Korea combines technological sophistication with participatory innovation. Through the **OPEN** system, citizens can track administrative decisions and report corruption. The **E-People** platform allows citizens to file petitions and suggestions directly to ministries, achieving a 90% response rate.

6.4 Brazil: Participatory Budgeting and Digital Inclusion

Brazil's participatory budgeting initiative, pioneered in Porto Alegre, integrates digital tools for community participation. Citizens directly allocate portions of municipal budgets, leading to improved infrastructure and social equity. Its platform *Participa+ Brasil* uses AI to analyze public feedback on policies.

7. Challenges and Limitations

Despite its promise, We-Governance faces several global challenges:

1. **Digital Divide:** Unequal access to technology marginalizes rural and low-income populations.
2. **Data Privacy and Cybersecurity:** Growing concerns about surveillance, data misuse, and hacking undermine citizen trust.
3. **Institutional Inertia:** Bureaucratic resistance often delays participatory reforms.
4. **Misinformation and Polarization:** Social media amplifies misinformation, complicating participatory decision-making.
5. **Ethical AI:** Use of algorithms in decision-making raises issues of bias and accountability.

Addressing these barriers requires robust data governance policies, capacity building, and cross-sector partnerships.

8. Discussion and Policy Implications

We-Governance is a **hybrid governance model** that integrates:

- The **efficiency** of E-Governance,
- The **democracy** of participatory governance, and
- The **collaboration** of networked societies.

To achieve effective We-Governance, governments should:

1. **Foster Digital Inclusion:** Expand broadband, reduce cost barriers, and enhance digital literacy.
2. **Strengthen Data Governance:** Enforce transparency laws and ethical AI guidelines.
3. **Encourage Co-Design:** Citizens, academia, and private sector must collaboratively shape digital public services.
4. **Implement Feedback Loops:** Platforms like MyGov and E-People should include measurable impact indicators.

5. **Measure Trust:** Governance success should include *trust indices*, not just service metrics.

9. Future Pathways

The future of We-Governance will likely involve integration with **emerging technologies** such as:

- **Blockchain** for decentralized transparency,
- **AI-driven chatbots** for citizen grievance redressal,
- **Big Data analytics** for predictive policymaking,
- **Metaverse platforms** for civic engagement simulations.

Moreover, the **concept of digital citizenship** will evolve, with cross-border participation (e.g., Estonia's e-Residency) blurring national boundaries.

10. Conclusion

The shift from E-Governance to We-Governance signifies more than technological progress—it marks a **philosophical transformation** in the relationship between citizens and the state.

E-Governance digitized government processes; We-Governance *democratizes* them. It builds on technology but thrives on *trust, inclusivity, and collective intelligence*.

As governments worldwide adopt participatory platforms and open data ecosystems, the true measure of success will not be the number of apps or portals launched—but how effectively citizens are empowered to shape their governance future.

In essence, **We-Governance transforms governance from a service to a partnership.**

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