

**EGOV2009 Workshop on
eGovernment Research & Societal Aging**

Organised by:

Björn Niehaves, European Research Center for Information Systems, Germany

Kim Normann Anderson, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

Hans J. Scholl, University of Washington, USA

Maddalena Sorrentino, State University of Milan, Italy

Abstract

Ten years ago, Peterson (1999, p3) warned that “[g]lobal aging, like a massive iceberg, looms ahead.” He also predicted severe consequences for government budgets and anticipated that the trend of societal aging would impose “wrenching economic and social costs”. While public administration research has intensively discussed the vulnerability of governments to aging-related fiscal stress (Roberts 2003), governments too have begun to ring the alarm bells. Budgets are already being hard hit, not only by an aging-related increase in spending on pensions, health care, long-term care, and unemployment transfers, but tax revenue is also projected to decline significantly, as a result of the relative increase of elderly in society. While almost all industrialized countries can expect population aging (United Nations 2002) and subsequent budget stress, what are the implications of the graying of society for a “graying of eGovernment initiatives and budgets”?

Societal aging is a major theme of government IT policies, from the national to the local level. In order to create a comprehensive information society and to prevent, among other things, an age-related digital divide, the EU, for instance, has placed the elderly at the focus of attention. Today, 14 of the world's 15 “oldest” countries – those with the largest percentage of people aged 65 or more – are to be found in Europe (Population Reference Bureau 2006). Here, research in 15 EU member states has demonstrated that all national information society strategies under analysis make some reference to the group of elderly people (Martin & Byrne 2003). The pervasive presence of the theme of societal aging in governmental IT policies mirrors expected developments on the demand side of eGovernment. Research points out that elderly often have a comparably high interaction frequency with governments. It thus exists a

strong and significant future demand for eGovernment services among senior citizens (Chen & Dorsey 2009).

While in the 1990s, many countries began to explore the implementation of eGovernment efforts, academic and practitioner communities are now under pressure to produce research that bridges the gap between eGovernment theory and practice. Despite the growing importance of the theme of societal aging for eGovernment practice, we need to assess our understanding and reflection of this phenomenon. Specifically, we should examine whether eGovernment research currently provides adequate theory, vocabulary, and methods for such research and the extent to which future eGovernment research is potentially able to contribute to tackling the substantial theoretical and practical challenges of an increasingly aging society (Niehaves et al. 2009).

The workshop will provide four examples or position statements of eGovernment research related to societal aging. These act as starting points and toeholds for the debate, followed by a comprehensive discussion of potentially fruitful avenues for future eGovernment research. It is sought to stimulate an argument on potential benefits and challenges of eGovernment research on societal aging among the participants.

Here, the workshop's target group includes researchers from various disciplines and communities interested in the multi-faceted and complex nature of eGovernment research on societal aging. It is intended by the organizers to produce a documentation of the results, which may be published in an appropriate manner. Details – also about how to get engaged in this initiative – will be discussed together with the workshop participants.

Workshop Agenda

10 minutes	Introduction of the workshop	Björn Niehaves
15 minutes	Aging Society: Bridging internet services and welfare technologies	Kim Normann Andersen
15 minutes	Theses on Coping Strategies for Gray Head Societies	Hans J. Scholl
15 minutes	Iceberg Ahead: A Delphi Study on eGovernment Research and Societal Aging	Björn Niehaves
15 minutes	eGovernment, Aging Society and Social Intermediaries: an Organizational Perspective	Maddalena Sorrentino
35 minutes	Discussion of challenges for eGovernment research on societal aging, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Methodological challenges• The challenge of inter-disciplinarity• The challenge of comparative research• Towards a research agenda• Implications for policy makers and public servants	all
15 minutes	Wrapping-up the workshop results	Jochen Scholl

References

- Chen, Y. C. and Dorsey, A. (2009) eGovernment for Current and Future Senior Citizens. In: *Handbook of Research on Strategies for Local eGovernment Adoption and Implementation: Comparative Studies 2009*(Ed, Reddick, C.) Information Science Reference, pp. 306-322.
- Niehaves, B.; Ortbach, K. and Becker, J.: The Demographic Challenge: Aging and Depopulation and their Consequences for eGovernment. In: Proceedings of the 42th Hawaii International Conference in Computer and System Sciences (HICSS-42). Waikoloa, Big Island, Hawaii, 2009.
- Population Reference Bureau (2006) *World Population Data Sheet 2006*, Available at <http://www.prb.org/pdf06/06WorldDataSheet.pdf>, Washington, DC.
- Peterson, P. G. (1999) *Gray Dawn: How the Coming Age Wave Will Transform America and the World*, Times Books, New York.
- Population Reference Bureau (2006) *World Population Data Sheet 2006*, Available at <http://www.prb.org/pdf06/06WorldDataSheet.pdf>, Washington, DC.
- Roberts, A. (2003) In the Eye of the Storm? Societal Aging and the Future of Public-Service Reform. *Public Administration Review*, **63**, 720-733.

United Nations (2002) *World Population Prospects, 2002 Revision*, United Nations, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, New York.