



Rethinking Planning + Participation

**NEW TECHNOLOGIES, OLD PROBLEMS,
BETTER PRACTICES**

11.201 GATEWAY: Planning Action

21 November 2007



Today's agenda

- 1. Rethink planning's interest in (obsession with?) “participation”—in transition to final part of the course.**
- 2. Understand the “participation industry” that interest has created.**
- 3. Examine the promise and limits of contemporary information and communication technologies (ICT) in particular.**

Review and extension

- **Modernist planning led to some successes but many disasters—and much criticism, especially of top-down, profession-dominated practice.**
- **Advocates of “deep democracy” have pushed the professional field and the project of planning hard.**
- **Some planners have become full-time participation facilitators and managers (“industry”).**
- **New technologies—the internet, ubiquitous GIS, etc.—seem to offer many opportunities.**
- **More and more problems are cross-sector problems, not just problems for public policy (let alone privately driven design).**

Three broad transitions underway

- **In the role of “active citizens”:** From *making claims* to *processing claims* (getting in the role of decisionmakers) and *deliberating*. Example: participatory budgeting in Brazil, deliberative polls.
- **In focus:** From *expanding channels for participation* to *enabling better problem-solving*. Problem-solving may be the only reason citizens (and others) stay involved in public affairs.
- **In scope of efforts:** From *devising better plans* to *co-producing change* through deliberation, negotiation, collective learning, and constituency building.

Three broad purposes of participation in planning

Agenda setting	Define issues and stakes for collective attention
Strategy making	Analyze, devise best-possible courses of action on given set of issues and stakes
Participatory design and/or implementation	Design and/or implement specific projects that advance the strategies.

Risks, in lieu of clear purposes

- **Letting the tactics drive things. Tactical specialists have strong incentives to recommend their specialties.**
- **Sending mixed signals, creating confusion, conflict.**
- **Missing opportunities to do smarter stuff.**

Image removed due to copyright restrictions: cover of *Community Participation Methods in Design and Planning*, by Henry Sanoff.

21st century town meetings

Screenshot removed due to copyright restrictions. See www.americaspeaks.org > 21st Century Town Meetings.

America Speaks “virtual tour” online.

Usefulness: Helps gauge citizen reaction quickly, generate momentum, sense of collective project. Very text driven, limited by table facilitators filtering input.

Visualization, modeling, communication

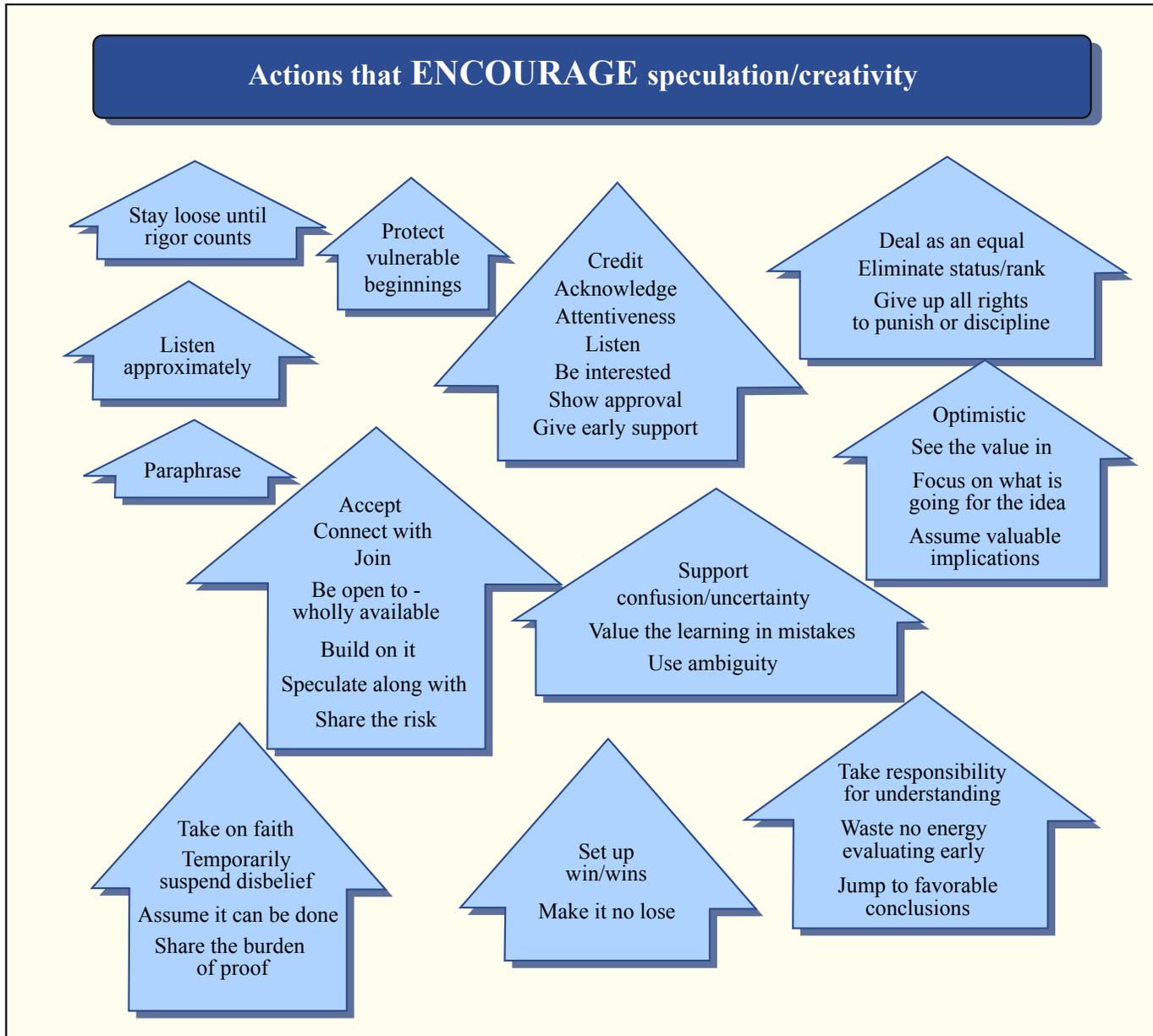
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... with key functions

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Usefulness: Helps “tame complexity,” revealing options and their implications more fully.
Does not provide a process.

Or creative group process tactics



From
*Conceptual
Blockbusting: A
Guide to Better
Ideas*

Usefulness:
Great in the
right context
(time and
place).

But having
ideas is one
thing, refining
and acting on
them is
something else.

Or “deliberative polling” and other “deliberative designs”

Deliberative polling: A randomly drawn group of citizens, with access to “experts,” deliberates a public issue and makes policy recommendations.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions:
cover of *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook*, edited by John Gastil and Peter Levine.

Logo Link: global “learning network,” focus on developing countries, local governments

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LogoLink at <http://www2.ids.ac.uk/logolink/index.htm>.

Participation as industry: Consultants, specialist staff, etc.

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See www.iap2.org.

**Stepping back: lessons
on technology use—
and misuse— from
business, government,
and “community
informatics.”**

Private sector lessons, hard won

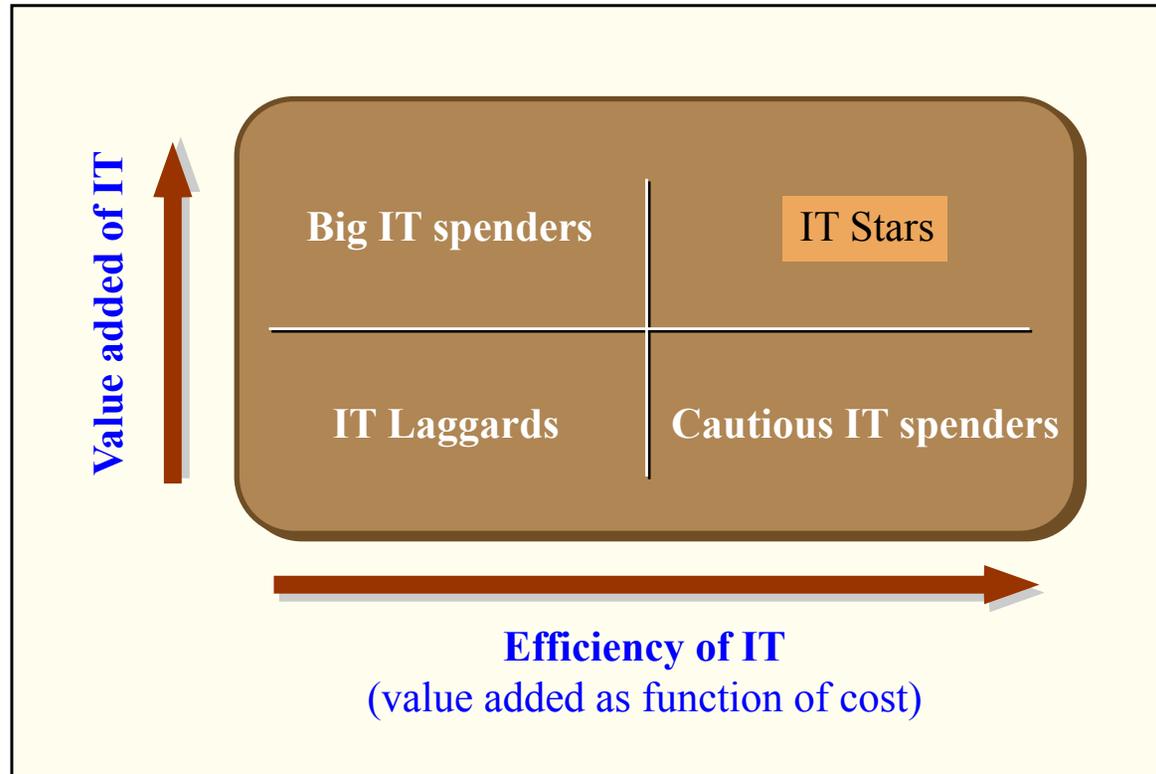


Figure by MIT OpenCourseWare.

Source: McKinsey and Company, *Do It Smart: Seven Rules of IT Performance* (1999)

Process model for working smarter with technology (organizational application)

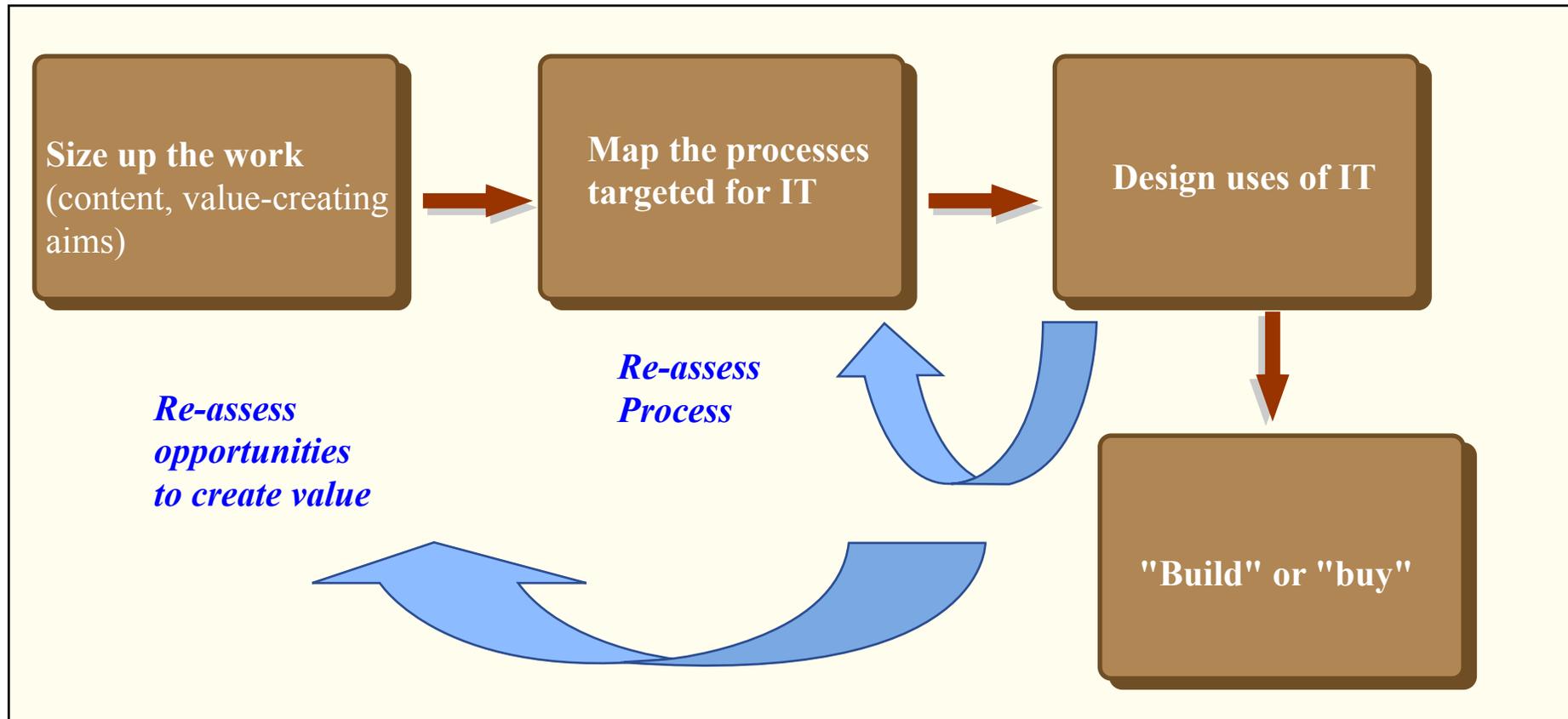
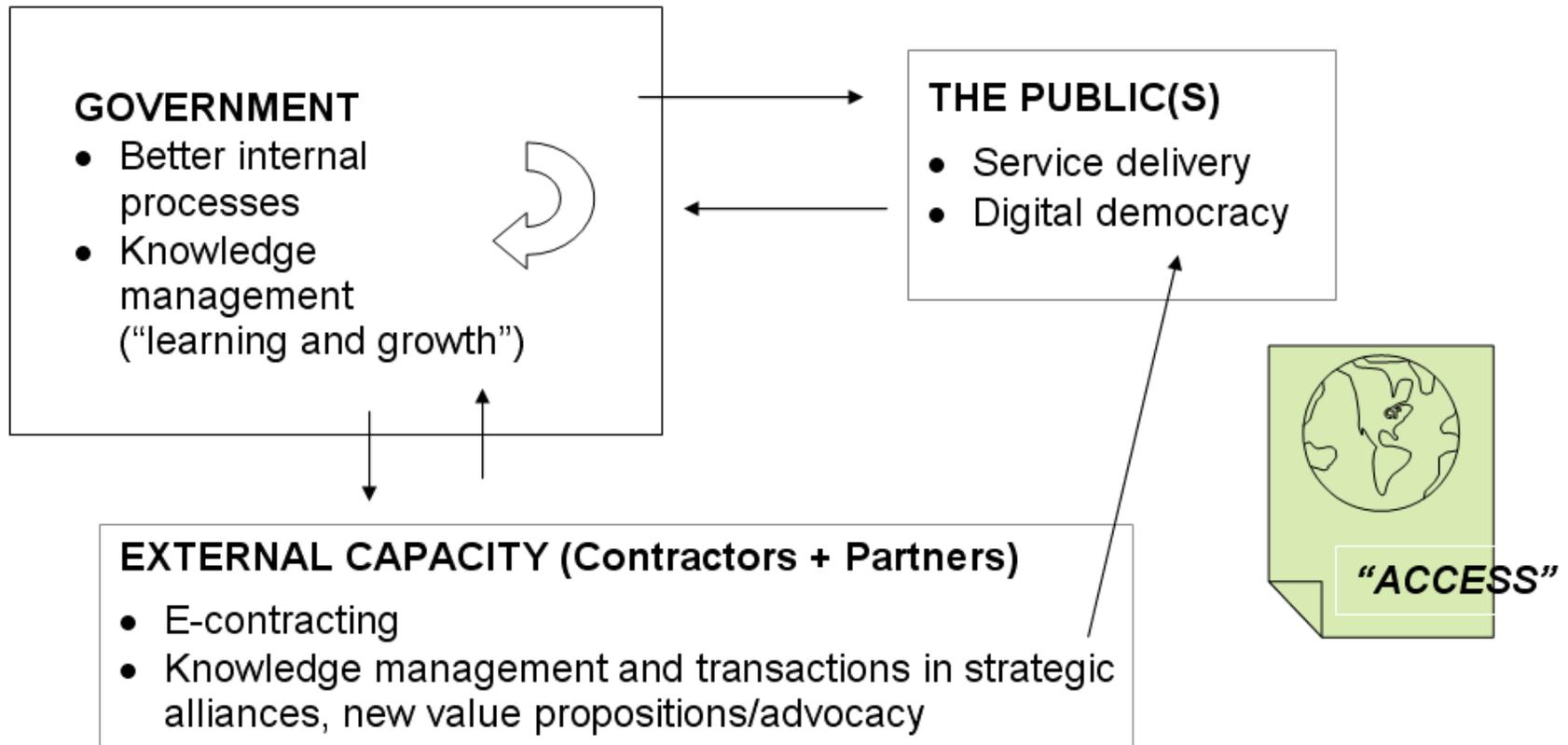


Figure by MIT OpenCourseWare.

E-Government objectives, evolution

Objectives	Examples
BROADCAST	Static web content describes services, representatives, how to access.
TRANSACTION	Interface allows someone to pay a parking ticket or contract with government online. See “e-citizen centre” at Singapore government website.
E-DEMOCRACY	Technology supports better governance through deliberation, more.

Purpose: Just transaction or transformation (non-routine problem-solving, broader social change)?



Pursuing “e-democracy” through “democratizing data” or “community informatics” (GIS, public data, etc.)

Many failed efforts failed to understand this
knowledge loop or cycle as a social process:

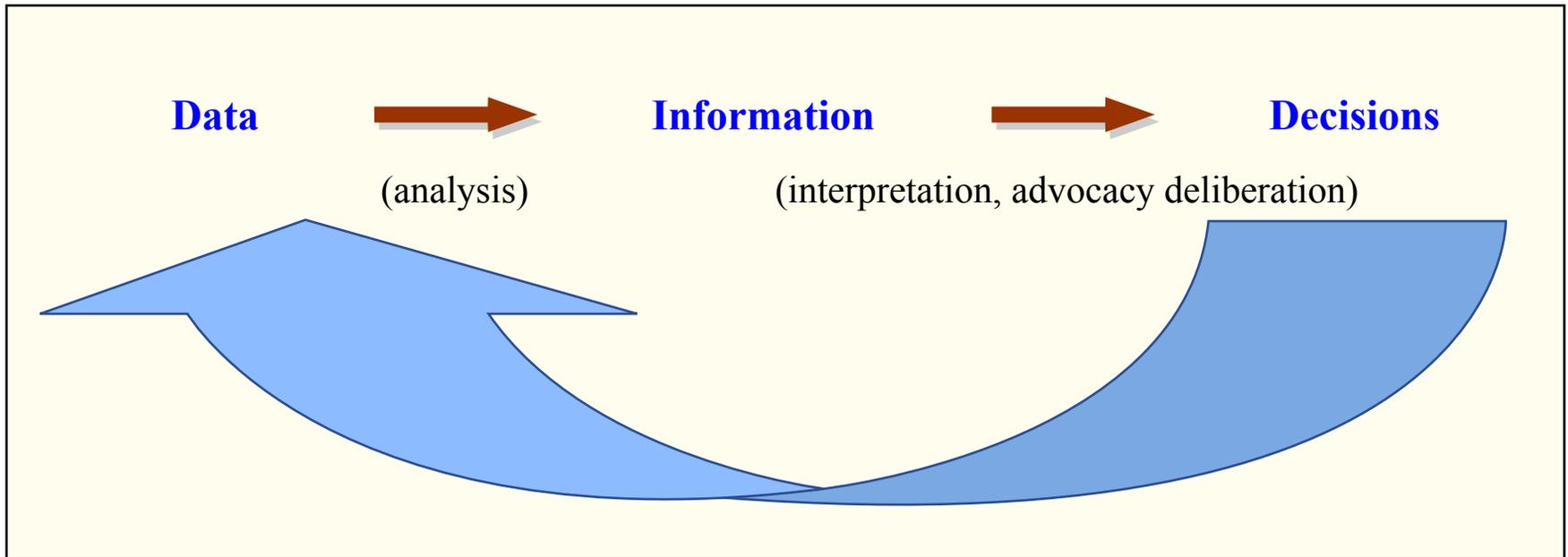


Figure by MIT OpenCourseWare.

A few more resources

Building the Virtual State
(on e-government)

Modernizing Democracy (on citizen
participation through technology)

Plus:

Cyberpolitics: Citizen Activism in the Age of the Internet

*Community Informatics: Enabling Communities with
Information and Communication Technologies*

The economy is too important to be left to the economists.

Technology is too important to be left to the technologists.