Chapter 6
The Governance of Partnerships in Local Government

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ABSTRACT

Partnering is often claimed to represent a solution small local government organizations (SLGOs) can resort to in order to manage innovation. However, especially when private partners are involved, resources and specialized competencies need to be allocated on the management of the partnership in order to guarantee that it will deliver a public value. SLGOs often lack such resources and this can make it difficult for them to benefit from Public-Private Partnerships. In the chapter a solution to this problem will be suggested based on the concept of Integrated System of Local Government, that represents a form of strategic and long term partnership for the sharing of resources and specialized competences among SLGOs. More specifically, it will be argued that if the partnership with the private partners is established directly by the integrated system, on behalf of its members, this can guarantee a better governance of the partnership even when the public sector organizations involved are SLGOs.

INTRODUCTION

According to a broad definition, "E-Governance is the public sector's use of information and communication technologies with the aim of improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in the decision-making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective" (UNESCO, 2008).

The experience of the past years, both at the local and the global level, shows that these results cannot be achieved simply through the use of ICTs as technologies for the informatization and the automation of the administrative processes. Rather, in

Table 1. The dimensions of innovation

Type of innovation	Example
Product innovation	new products (e.g. new instrumentation in hospitals)
Service innovation	new ways in which services are provided to users (e.g. on-line tax forms)
Process innovation	new ways in which organisational processes are designed (e.g. administrative reorganisation into front- and back-office processes; process mapping leading to new approaches)
Position innovation	new contexts or 'customers' (e.g. the Connexions service for young people in England)
Strategic innovation	new goals or purposes of the organisation (e.g. community policing; foundation hospitals)
Governance innovation	new forms of citizen engagement, and democratic institutions (e.g. area forums; devolved government)
Rhetorical innovation	new language and new concepts (e.g. the concept of congestion charging for London, or a carbon tax)

order to achieve the goals of E-Governance, what is needed is a deep innovation process leading to a radical transformation of Public Administration, especially at the cultural and organizational level (CIO 2005).

Starting from a systematic analysis of the academic literature on innovation, the following classification of different types of innovation has been introduced in (Hartley, 2005, 2006) (Table 1)

Since they aim at the transformation of Public Administration, the innovation processes entailed by E-Governance involve all the dimensions of innovation listed in the table. This makes such processes particularly complex to manage: they require technological innovation to be integrated with other kinds of innovation processes.

As a matter of fact, E-Governance entails a redefinition of all the activity areas of Public Administration: the redefinition of the relations of constituency and participation (E-Democracy); the assumption of a citizen centric view in the delivery of high quality services to citizens and enterprises using different and innovative channels (E-Services); the re-organization of the back-office of the government organizations in order to make them more effective, efficient and accountable (E-Administration).

The management of such complex innovation processes requires the availability of resources and specialized competencies that the Government Organizations often lack. This makes the trans-

formation of the system of Government entailed by E-Governance difficult to achieve, especially at the level of Local Government that, nevertheless, represents the first and more frequent point of contact between Public Administration and citizens (and enterprises).

The lack of resources in Local Government organizations mainly depends on the administrative fragmentation that often affects the systems of Local Government. This appears to be particularly evident in the countries of the European Union, as shown in Table 2 (CEMR, 2009).

Such a high administrative fragmentation determines, as a direct consequence, the presence in these countries of a large number of Small Local Government Organizations (SLGOs - municipalities with less than 5.000 inhabitants). Just as an example, consider that in Italy 72% of the 8101 municipalities have less than 5.000 inhabitants.

Administrative fragmentation not only makes innovation processes difficult to manage in SLGOs; it also makes it difficult for SLGOs to simply maintain the level of the services already delivered; this could happen when, for instance, a municipality lacks a human resource, also on a temporary basis. In such a situation it is more likely for SLGOs to focalize their resources on the management of the ordinary administrative processes, instead of entering complex innovation processes such as those required by E-Governance.

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