Chapter 5.32
Paradigm and Practice:
The Innovative Organization to Deal with E-Government

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ABSTRACT

The contribution starts from assessing the reciprocal influence between organizational change and the adoption of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Public Administrations. ICTs cannot work without a proper organizational change, but at the same time, ICTs are usually one of the main drivers of such change in public administrations, as they provide the political momentum and act as catalyzer or enabler. After reviewing the role that New Public Management experts granted to the ICT in fueling, or rather in following public sector reforms, the work identifies a possible evolution of the model from New Public Management to Innovative Public Management. This model is based on the adoption of technological and organizational innovation at three levels, namely the operational choice, the collective choice and the institutional choice levels. Thereby, the chapter presents some of the current and future impacts of ICTs on institutional configuration, on policy and decision making, and on the organizational/managerial structure. Finally, the ecosystem for an innovative public administration is re-interpreted in the light of recent ICT changes.

ICTS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE: A RECIPROCAL INFLUENCE

Papers and articles about E-government often present the leitmotif that organizational change is the *condicio sine qua non* for a successful adoption of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) by Public Administrations. While sharing this view, the present contribution emphasizes that it works also all the way around: ICTs can't work without a proper organizational change, but at the same time ICTs are usually one of the main drivers of such change in public organizations.

Bureaucracies all around the world wave their e-government policies, projects, *ad hoc* units and

probably part of this fuzz is merely a tool for consensus building. Nonetheless ICTs are providing the political momentum and often represent the catalyzer for Public Administration change. This remark does not fall in the realm of the "chicken or the egg" questions, but rather clarifies the assumptions of this chapter, which acknowledges the reciprocal influences of PA reform processes and ICTs developments.

The starting point has been the model of Van de Donk and Snellen (Figure 1), who applied the van Parijis model of causal and functional links on ICTs in Public Administration.[1]

According to the model, ICT developments change the production functions in Public Administration since a causal relationship exists between autonomous ICT developments and their cost structure on the one hand, and the possible cost-savings on the other. At the same time a causal relationship links cost-profiles and cost savings possibilities of ICT in the cost optimum, service optimum and democratic optimum, as ICTs improve best practices in the public sector by exerting a constant attraction. In order to exploit the possibilities created by ICTs to enhance efficiency, service provision and demo-cratic standards, Public Administrations need to undergo institutional adaptations. However the model should also be read in the opposite sense, accounting for the autonomous political, legal, economic and professional developments of public administration, which "provoke institutional adaptations and ICT applications to improve cost, service and democratic levels in public administration."

This view can be included in the "transformist school," a Solomonic approach according to which the spread of ICTs determines smooth transformations of the pre-existing socio-economical structures in a way which is not disruptive nor negligible.[2]

FROM NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT TO INNOVATIVE STATE MANAGEMENT

The model illustrated above also pioneered the importance of the reciprocal influence between ICTs and the autonomous transformations of Public Administration. Yet, there is an even more controversial level which concerns the public

Figure 1. Model of causal and functional links applied on ICTs in public administration (Snellen & Van de Donk, 1998)
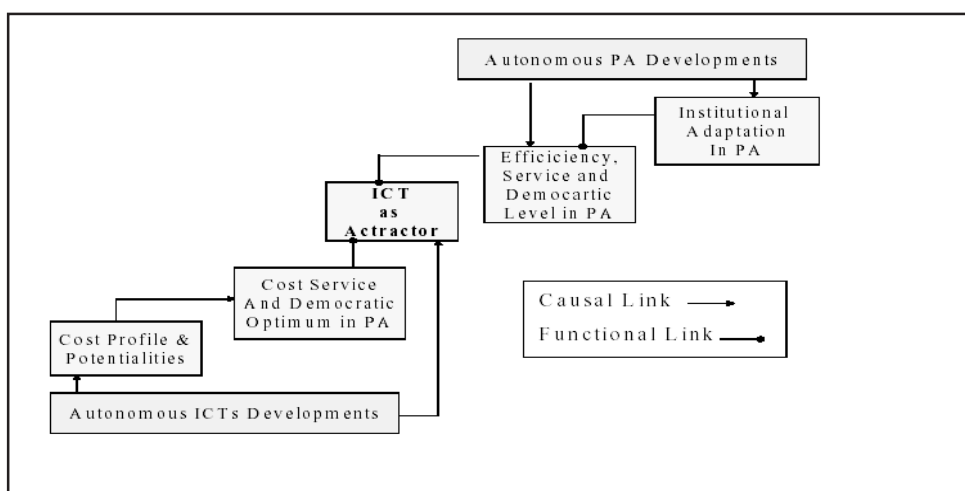
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