The role of ICTS in the management change
of local municipalities

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Sommario 1. Introduction – 2.The *e-government* process: the role of ICTs in Italian public sector. – 3. The relation among local governments and enterprises: the "SUAP". – 4. Some experiences of innovative "SUAP" in Italy.[**]

1. Introduction

The development of new technologies based on information/communication and their implementation inside public sector is being very significant: ICTs are changing the information system and the organizational, managerial, relational and cultural dimensions of Italian public sector. In particular the ICTs implementation is changing the way to produce and to distribute public services to citizens and to SMEs.

The information management has always been very important in public sector: the management of the documents and of information is significant because it encompass high-costs, high-quality and high-safety services.

The new information system inside public sector can no longer trust only on good professional but it must be a systemic and integrated management in a customer driven perspective.

During the last decade Italian public sector changed its organizational and managerial profiles, improving the autonomy of local governments and adopting "new" managerial tools. In this change the ICTs played – and they are still playing – an important role, introducing in public sectors a "new" organizational, managerial, informative-accounting and relational model: *a network model*.[1]

In particular the last ten years have been characterized for the development of information technologies, which substantially changed their identity improving the interconnectivity of information systems. To describe this change the term information and communicative

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[1] L. ANSELMI, L'azienda Comune, Rimini, Maggioli, 2001.

technologies (ICT) has been used rather than the term information technology. The promise of computer supported interconnectedness led to the internet and the rise of *e-business* and, perhaps by association, the development of the concept of *e-government* and plans and actions to make *e-government* manifest (Heeks, 1999).

E-government and *e-business* as terms are seen as encompassing more than simply the use of ICTs to provide government services. Words such as 'transforming' or 're-inventing' are widely used (see Heeks, 1999).[2] *E-government* and *e-business* are seen as being important in a variety of areas, in which ICTs are being introduced and they have a large influence on information management. First, a simple use of ICTs is to provide access to documents and forms on line. The benefits here are constant (24/7) availability of documents. Second, e-government and e-business can be as new means of providing services. A third area is that ICTs can provide access and communication among customers, business and public actors using email and Internet. Fourth, ICTs can be used so that transactions between different private and public actors can be conducted electronically and often using routine procedures. This should make the interactions between different actors quicker.

The "new" role played by ICTs supported the globalization, drawing a different framework (competitive arena), in which private and public actors have to carry out their activities. In this framework ICTs changed the "space" dimension, the "time" dimension, the competition among businesses, the communication inside and outside organizations, the way to carry out economic transactions, the way to manage business and to manage companies.[3]

In short term with ICTs businesses have seized new internet-based opportunities in terms of faster information flows as well as easier and cheaper access to markets, organisations and individuals. The business-to-business (B2B) trade has enjoyed a quieter existence in the last two, three years with the establishment of new intermediaries that trade products/services between businesses.[4]

In public sector, initiatives aiming at reducing the overall expenses and at improving the economic effectiveness of the assigned resources has immediately been considered as an obliged passage.

Information management and *e-government* have a growing importance in a business economics perspective inside Italian public sector. Then, it is necessary a shifting of competence needed from law competence to business economics competence, with particular reference to the management of resources. In this scenario, it can be pointed out a growing importance of ICTs.

In this paper we describe the impact of ICTs implementation inside Italian local governments in order to point out how new public management is changing with the *e-government* process: in

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[2]D. OSBORNE and T. GAEBLER., *Reinventing government: how the entrepreneurial spirit is transforming the Public Sector*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1992.

[3]E. BORGONOVI, *Le tecnologie dell'informazione e i cambiamento dell'amministrazione pubblica*, in *Azienda Pubblica*, 2000, n. 1, p. 5.

[4]M. BARRATT and K. ROSDAHL, *Exploring business-to-business marketsites*, in *European Journal of Purchasing &Supply Management*, 8, 2002, p. 111.

particular this paper aims to focus how the relations among local governments and SMEs are changing though the use of ICTs. Section number two will describe the *e-government* phenomenon, section number three will analyse the relations among local governments and SMEs with particular care to the SUAP (SUAP means in Italian "Sportello Unico per le attività produttive", in English it means "Front-office desk for enterprises") and section number four will examine several significant experiences carried out by Italian local governments related with the on-line SUAP.

2. The e-government process: the role of ICTs in Italian public sector

E-governement is rapidly evolving into a new paradigm for the *net economy*. The Web is spreading its reach from individual information to collective participation, from private business to public discourse.

Corporate optimism *abo\ut* the *role* of technology as an instrument for efficiency and transparency in the delivery of public services is contrasted with democratic concern for unlimited concentration of control on personal privacy and freedom: innovation is opening a "door" that economic constrains may close again. It is a task for responsible governments to leave that "door" wide open.

E-government process may be defined as *the use of information technology, in particular the Internet, to deliver public services in a much more convenient, customer oriented, cost effective and altogether different and better way. It affects an agency's dealing with citizens, businesses and other public agencies as well as its internal business processes and employees. The e-government movement is being driven by the need for governmnet to:*
- *cut costs and improve efficiency*
- *meet citizen expectations and improve citizen relationships*
- *facilitate economic development.*[5]

Following the Layne and Lee definition electronic government involves the implementation of technology in public sector*, particularly web based Internet applications to enhance the access to and delivery of government information and service to citizens, business partners, employees, other agencies and government entities. It has the potential to help build better relationships between government and the public by making interaction with citizens smoother, easier and more efficient. Indeed government agencies report using electronic commerce to improve core business operations and deliver information and services faster, cheaper and to wider groups of customers.[6]*

In this direction *e-government* is an important *chance* for all European States in order to modernize public administrations; to make government more near to citizens as the ability to communicate with elected representatives will get better; to make government more accountable to citizens as people will become more involved in government being able to look up voting

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[5] D. HOLMES, *E.gov: strategies for government*, London, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2001, p. 2.

[6] K. LAYNE and J. LEE, *Developing fully functional e-governmnet: a four stage model*, in *Government Information Quartely*, 2001, issue 2, p. 122.

records, to comment national and local legislations and to monitor public earnings; to allow greater public access to information as people could access to information easily by the Internet; to make government more efficient and cost-effective; to make public services more convenient. In order to reach this *chance* maximizing the potential of *e-government* it is necessary to carry out a very big work involving Central and local governments, civic groups and the research community.[7]

In Italy the *e-government* process started in June 2000 when Italian Government issued an Action Plan in line with the European Union innovation policies (*eEurope*, 2000). Italian Action Plan must be introduced in a bigger reform process of public sector, started in 1990s and characterized for the receipt of the principle of subsidiarity (introduced with the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992), for the administrative devolution and for the fiscal federalism: *public sector reform is, if generally defined, change within public sector organisation that seeks to improve their performance*.[8]

With the Action Plan Italian local governments became the front-office among citizens, SMEs and the public system: *e-government* should mean better government modernising back office structures; improving the capacity to deliver services through the use of e-channels such as web, email and internet applications; modernising of organisational relationships – more joined up thinking within governmental organisations and between them; improving the interactivity with the citizen and communities through capacity building their ability to use the e-channel for communication, consultation, democratic involvement (e-democracy). By this electronic government means more than just interactivity between citizen and government but also between citizens themselves, voluntary organisations, community groups and community networks and between citizen's and commerce.[9]

Italian Action Plan is a working progress, which is particularly involving people inside and outside public administrations: to realize the *e-government* change it is necessary to solve also some general problems about the digital divided and about security and privacy.[10] That is why Italian government is trying to develop the professional ability in order to put the human resources at the centre of this innovative phenomenon.

Another important problem inside Italian public sector is represented by the integration between the on-line-services and the organizational processes. Only by this integration it will be possible to realize the *e-government* process and to improve the effectiveness, the transparency and the digitalisation of the information.

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[7] J. J. GLYNN and M. P. MURPHY, *Public management. Failing accountabilities and failing performance review*, in *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 1996, vol. 9, n. 5-6.

[8] R. HEEKS, *Reinventing government in the information age*, in R. HEEKS (edited by), *Reinventing government in the information age*, London, Routledge, 1999, p. 10.

[9] B. W. DEARSTYNE, *E-business, e-government & Information Proficiency,* in *Information management Journal*, October/2001, Vol. 35, Issue 4, p. 416.

[10] P. NORRIS, *Digital divide: civic engagement, information poverty, and the internet worldwide*, London, Cambridge University, 2001.

The importance of *e-government* could be measured in terms of relations between the public administrations and citizens, in terms of relations between the public administrations and SMEs and in terms of public services quality:

– **Relations between public administrations.** The new technologies utilization inside public sector makes it necessary the integration between public administrations and the implementation of a *network* involving all public sector. Internet should be the base of this *network*. In this *network* central administrations cover an operative role of *back-office* while local administrations cover an operative role of *front-office* of public services.

– **Relations between public administrations and citizens**. By a "policy and vertical administration" it is possible to go through an "horizontal administration", customer oriented and characterized by an intense informative exchanges with the external environment. For this objective *e-government* covers the main important role: the new technologies utilization yield operative effectiveness improvement inside public administrations, services integration and the free access for citizens to public services-on-line and to all the information. At the traditional relationship A 2 A (administration to administration) *e-government* makes it possible to pass at the new relationship A 2 C (administration to citizens) for whom each citizen is able to access by the web to all public services. The free access has to respect the safety requirements and the statement of privacy.

– **Relations between public administrations and enterprises**. In order to give an answer to the enterprises requests, concerning their competition strengthening, public administrations have to develop specific innovations on public services; in order to improve the support to the enterprises situated in their territory public administrations have also to supply opportune and useful interventions. In particular market globalisation and the new economic context point out new requests and new relationship between the public administrations and the enterprises: to satisfy these new requests it is very important as competitive key the synergy and the interaction with the public sector, in order to obtain opportune and high quality services.

– **The public services quality**. Inside *e-government* context it is possible to identify on-line public services as:
  o The implementation of "informative portals" with free access for citizens using the web.
  o The implementation of "services portals" in order to supply on-line public services, to supply information to citizens and to allow interactive requests of services and the execution of some transactions.
  Inside these "services portals" it is possible to divide public services in four categories:
    – Services for citizens
    – Services for enterprises
    – Services for employment
    – Services for the certification
  o The development of the "local civic network" in order to supply public services and to improve citizens participation.
  o The development of the communication between public administrations and citizens by e-mail and the implementation of virtual discussion forum. Developing on-line public services the quality of services should improve.

Following the mentioned directions it is possible to understand how e-government could not be considered as only a technological phenomenon: it involves the organizational, relational, informative-accounting and cultural dimensions inside and outside public sector: simply automating existing services is not enough: they and the organisational structures which surround them must be transformed if the full potential of ICTs is to be realised. (...) most e-government initiatives have focused on increasing efficiency and on customer responsiveness. (...) e-government it seen as essential to aid businesses in their interactions with the state.11

E-government is a big *chance* for European States but it will take long time to be realized involving organizational, relational, informative-accounting and relational changes inside and outside public sector. In the European context it has also to be coordinated across European States in order to get homogeneous processes of development and of diffusion of new technologies.

3. The relation among local governments and enterprises: the "SUAP"

A significant part of the reform process of Italian public sector is covered by the services oriented to SMEs. The presence of SMEs is characterizing the Italian economic context, making important to highlight how the reform process started in 1990s and the *e-government* phenomenon are trying to meet the SMEs requests: *in the digital age public services need to be instantly accessible around the clock from home or work. Ultimately e-government is more than selling public licenses over the internet. It's about making the transition from the industrial society to the emerging information society*.12

To give an answer to the SMEs requests public administrations have to develop specific innovations on public services and they have to supply opportune and useful interventions in order to improve the support to the competition of the enterprises situated in their territory.13

In particular the market globalisation and the new economic context (in which enterprises have to operate), are pointing out new requests from SMEs to public sector. On these new requests it should be possible and it should be helpful to build a new relational model. The new relational model has to be a *networked model* among public and private actors based on new technologies and in particular based on Internet applications: new technologies and Internet applications are starting to be competitive keys of the value chain of enterprises.14

In the value chain are also important the synergy and the interaction with public actors, in order to obtain opportune and high quality services able to satisfy the real SMEs requests.

In Italy the satisfaction of the enterprises needs is mainly assigned to local governments, and in particular to Municipalities, which are the front-office of the public system.

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11 D. STEDMAN JONES and B. CROWE, *Transformation not automation: the e-government challenge*, London, Demos, 2001, p. 11.

12 D. HOLMES, *E.gov: strategies for government*, p. 3.

13 E. BORGONOVI, *Principi e sistemi aziendali per le amministrazioni pubbliche*, Milano, Egea, 1996, p. 24

14 M. E. PORTER, *Clusters and the new economics of competition*, in *Harward Business Review*, November-december, 1998, p. 81

This paper tried to examine in this section and in the next one the relations among Italian local municipalities and SMEs focusing its attention on the real SMEs requests, on the local public services demand and on the utilization of new technologies as an answer to all the SMEs needs.

At the moment in Italy there is a *gap* between the demand and the offer of local public services: services are usually very far from the SMEs times and quality standards, and they use to be not able to support the SMEs activity and competitiveness. Some traditional reasons of this *gap* are:

- the normative uncertainty;
- the absence of technological desks;
- the absence of a correlated informative system within the different public offices;
- the absence of communication between different public offices;
- the bureaucratic delays;
- the difficulty to obtain systematically information about U.E. opportunities.

All these reasons are pointing out the necessity to co-ordinate and to integrate systematically the different public activities dedicated to the SMEs in order to reduce the bureaucracy, to improve the support and the effectiveness of local public services.

The main answer of Italian Central Government for the reduction of the mentioned *gap* has been the establishment of one interlocutor with the enterprises: this interlocutor is called "SUAP" (Sportello Unico per le Attività Produttive – in English is: The Front Office Desk for Enterprises) and it has been implemented in Italian Municipalities.

The implementation of the "SUAP" should guarantee in the Italian Central Government perspective a real answer to the new SMEs requests because Italian municipalities are on the territory and they are very near to the enterprises needs. In the Italian Central Government perspective the "SUAP" implementation should:

- allow municipalities to understand in advance the enterprises requests;
- improve the quality standards of local public services;
- reduce the bureaucracy and the administrative obligations;
- improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of public actions.

"SUAP" is considered the best instrument to supply services suitable with the SMEs requests, setting up a synergy on the territory which will allow the SMEs competitiveness strengthen its competitiveness.

Unfortunately the implementation of the "SUAP" in Italian Municipalities is not enough to improve the quality of local public services and to reduce the *gap* between the demand and the offer of local public services: the production and distribution processes of local public services involve often few public actors. So the problem is not only to modify the relations between the front-office subject, which is in Italy the Municipality, and the enterprise, but it is also to modify the relations among the front-office and all the other public actors involved in the production process of the service. If the front-office is surely the subject which has to distribute the service to the enterprise, the production of the service may involve also other public administrations: in this case the activities chain which describe the production process of the service has to consider

different competences, different skills and different actors. In these cases it is very significant the integration level among the different public administrations.

Table n. 1 – The activities chain of local public services.

Table n. 1 shows the composition of the activities chain, which describes the production and distribution processes of public services: in this chain the enterprise is the first and the final element of the chain. The first element because public services should be produced in order to satisfy the real enterprise's needs; the last element because the effectiveness of the production and distribution processes is based on the enterprise satisfaction. Municipality which is the front-office subject has to understand the enterprise's needs, it has to receive the enterprise's request and at the end it has to distribute the public service.

The quality of the service depends in these cases by the integration level obtained among all the different public actors involved in the production process: the integration concerns particularly the communication and the relations among public administrations. So the "SUAP" is surely an important tool to involve the enterprise in the activities chain, which has to be customer oriented, but it has also to improve the coordination among the different public administrations which are called to give their contribute to the activities chain.

This is the reason for which it is very important the coordination role of the "SUAP" inside public sector: "SUAP" has to develop the integration among all the public administrations in order to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of the activities chain. In this direction this paper would like to highlight the necessity of re-determining the relationships between enterprises and public administrations in one hand and the relationships among public administrations in the other hand. Only following these directions the "SUAP" could be really a co-ordinated and systematic answer to the SMEs requests.

To reach the above objective the implementation and the development of the "SUAP" in Italian municipalities have to consider the support offered by new technologies. Today Internet applications represent a big opportunity to connect different actors, to transfer documents, to produce and to distribute information, to produce and to distribute services. Internet may realize a networked relational model among public and private actors, reducing the space and the time distances: by this way it should be possible also to reduce costs, and to improve the effectiveness of public actions.

With the implementation of ICTs it should be possible to draw a new activities chain in which the distances between the different elements will be reduced.

These are some of the reasons which are pushing in Italy as in all the rest of Europe the *e-government* process: with the *e-government* process it is possible to join the new technologies with the reform process of public sector supporting the integration among public administrations.

The importance of the use of new technologies may be pointed out with regard to the integration concept: *integration* means to reduce the duplication of the information provided by enterprises to public administrations, to reduce the duplication of documents, to concentrate the information management in order to cut costs and to supply high quality services.[15]

4. Some experiences of innovative "SUAP" in Italy

The world of public administrations, just considering the peculiarities of the activities carried out, has always dealt with a great deal of "information"; the essence itself of their "productive process", depends, in fact, on the almost exclusive "management" of information.

The changes introduced by the advent of ICTs have emphasized further on this tendency, because the computer innovations have showed essentially a function of simplification of technical-operative procedures, lightening the operators from the routine activities. At present, the information technology implementing represents, on one side, the opportunity of increasing relations and exchanges among several public bodies and, on the other side, the chance of providing the citizen with more and more sophisticated services able to satisfy their needs.

Research has gone through the impact of ICTs on SUAP and more generally on the development of on-line services and communal portals. The sole counters, according to Italian Government's thought, are evolving into "intangible structures" or better "virtual ones" in which starting, production and achievement of the service develop in full through computerized offices.

The tested sample concerns: all Italian seats of local government and several Communes that have distinguished themselves for their work in order to realize plans and actions connected directly or indirectly (smart-card, digital signature, electronic documents) to the progressive "dematerialization" of the management activity.

On the basis of the first results provided by the recent research on Innovation in services of local bodies, it has been understood that, notwithstanding the formal institution of the sole counter, its operative value was still very limited.

Firms seem to have scarce knowledge of services provided by the counter and often even to ignore their existence. This points out a "gap" between supply and demand of public services that often have not the requirements needed by firms that cannot find support in public managements in order to make competitive choices and grow.

It also comes out that local bodies traditional difficulty in communicating with their citizens and the firms working on that territory is still great.

Therefore, it has been studied how sole counters are developing and, above all, how they exploit ICTs in order to adjust their services to their community's needs.

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[15] Stedman Jones wrote that *there is a fairly clear spectrum of development for e-Government services with four distinct stages: Information (...); Interaction (...); Transaction (...); Integration (...).* Following this line Integration is necessary to develop integrated services that *operate across government agencies and departments*. D. STEADMAN JONES and CROWE, *Transformation not Automation*, p. 15.

We are talking more and more of an "information society", testifying the part that also public bodies should play in the sharing and availability process of information, trying to approach to citizens and to be in favour of changes.

Table n. 2 - Summary of the results.[16]

Questions	Total results	%	Result in Chief town of district	%	Result in other Municipalities	%
Has the suap been realised?	38	100%	20	100%	18	100%
Is the suap consultable on - line?	28	74%	12	60%	16	89%
What kinds of informations does it supply ?						
Does it explain the porpose of the services and its working?	28	74%	12	60%	16	89%
Does it supply some informations about the incentives for the company activity?	11	29%	7	35%	4	22%
Does it show the documents required for each activity?	23	61%	9	45%	14	78%
Does it supply the list of the available proceedings?	25	66%	11	55%	14	78%
Are there data-bases about economic system and business activity ?	12	32%	6	30%	6	33%
Is there an e-mail adress of the suap?	30	79%	14	70%	16	89%
What about interaction:						
Does it allow to open the practices on-line?	4	11%	1	5%	3	17%
Does it exist the possibility to let in some request or obtain business informations on line?	5	13%	1	5%	4	22%
Is it possible to down-load papers and forms?	28	74%	12	60%	16	89%
Is it possible to check the step of the procedure?	17	45%	8	40%	9	50%
Does it exist a specific area to take it aut bad moods and discontents?	7	18%	1	5%	6	33%
Is it possible to obtain certifications and authorizations on- line?	9	24%	1	5%	8	44%
Instruments to enable at the use :						
Password-login	16	42%	8	40%	8	44%
Smart-card	2	5%	0	0%	2	11%
Other	4	11%	2	10%	2	11%
Is it possible to pay on-line some service on- line?	5	13%	1	5%	4	22%

The research has followed two main guiding principles: the first one tends to check the diffusion of on-line sole counter and the kind of information given. The second one inspects the interaction ability with firms and more generally with the users.

As regards the first point, that one of communication, it has been noted that for 6 seats of local government among 20 (40%), even if all had started the single counter, it is possible to know by web only the office's site and visiting hours, but there is no possibility to have access on-line to an informative section.

On the whole, the 74% of the communes observed, has a web access to the counter that makes it possible to grasp the aim and the services offered. Within this ambit many Communes such as Pisa, Venezia, Mantova, Modena, Lucca and Firenze pay great attention to the normative aspects and offer a detailed description of the working counter and of the procedure of the started affairs.

Most web sites visited acquaint with the documents needed for each productive section (handicraft, trade…) and for each single permission or franchise requested (starting activity, restructure, location, settlement..).

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[16] The analysis of the web site has involved the following municipalities: Ancona, Aosta, Bari, Bologna, Cagliari, Campobasso, Catanzaro, Firenze, Genova, L'Aquila, Milano, Napoli, Palermo ,Perugia, Potenza,Roma, Torino, Trento, Udine, Venezia, Arona, Livorno, Belluno, Cuneo, Faenza, Trieste, Lucca, Mantova, Modena, Novara, Parma, Pescara, Pisa, Prato, Reggio- calabria, Siena, Siracusa, Tiene.

The information concerning incentives to juvenile and female entrepreneurial activity, and concerning the achievement of community financing are substantially not very widespread (29%), the same for the sections dedicated to the spreading of the productive and socioeconomic peculiarities of the territory (32%).

The second guiding principle has checked the grade of interaction offered by local sites and portals.

Rarely it is possible to forward an affair completely on-line. The results of the research have identified substantially four communes: Bologna, Pisa, Livorno and Prato, however, for the first three ones, the possibility of obtaining permission on-line remains limited to self-certification, while users of Prato can start by internet even the most complex procedure.

It seems widespread the chance of unloading forms, format and facsimiles of application that makes it possible for the user a more easy filling in at one's own residence, going to the local office only to deliver the application.

About half of the visited sites let the user check the proceeding of his affair, even if there is often a certain asynchrony between the real state of the administrative procedure and the information placed at the user's disposal. In many cases, in fact, the "loading" of data is still manual and so a temporal phase-difference is inevitable.

Besides, this shows also the need of administrations of putting into being all procedures able to warrant, on one side, users' defence of privacy and, on the other, security in the exchange of information. At present, the mostly utilized solution is: registering users assigning to each of them a password and a login. The use of smart cards to have access to counter's services is not yet satisfactorily developed, even if the interest for these kind of supports is very high.

Nowadays, in fact, many communes have created their own "city card" (Siena, Firenze, Modena, Parma, Pisa) and the list of bodies that are experimenting electronic identity cards is certainly considerable. The city cards, therefore, makes it possible to have access to a quantity of services still quite limited (payment of parking, access to local transit); while electronic identity cards are still in course of experimentation due to the importance of protecting and "certifying" the truthfulness and treatment of stored up data.

Only few communes have started interaction procedures in order to identify particular reasons of discontent or dissatisfaction. It is true that almost every commune has activated an e-mail address reserved to the sole counter, but only Udine and Faenza have dedicated a section of their site to a schedule about the services' quality and system analysis.

The investigation shows clearly that the web pages of the communes, are changing from simple "informative expositor", where we can only find some information about political bodies and their organizing structure, into true PORTALS where it is possible to have access to a wide range of information and services.

Portals give information about local events, present and future plans, propose surveys, ask for opinions and advices, becoming in substance the privileged interface between administration and citizens and between administration and firms.

Also the sole counter become part of this context for the productive activities .

Modena for example has creates within its own portal GIM (Giovane Impresa Modena = young firm Modena), where it is possible to have access to a wide range of information and services, such as: forms and guides on the start-up phase (drawing up of business-plans and financial statements), the possibility of sending queries and questions on line to which a consultant answers, to check the fares to obtain permissions…

Ancona has supported its on line sole counter with other virtual counters (on-line affairs and tax portal).

Venezia and Padova have signed an agreement in order to create " **The Venetian Metropolitan Area**" as the reference point for the northwest.

Among the services object of the agreement there is the development of a telematic integrated sole counter, as further element of integration between the two realities which represent a metropolitan continuum. Besides, Venezia has developed a communication system crypted through a mobile phone, that enables the user to receive and send information through a Keyphone.

Genova has experimented the launching of a new portal **TU6 GENOVA**, whose management has been entrusted to a firm belonging to the commune itself. Its aim is to make it possible to have an easy and quick access to a series of on line services and information that come from firms dealing with public utilities, belonging or not to the commune.

The introduction of digital certificates and signatures, smart cards and more generally the spreading of computer technologies of communication, takes place in a wide innovation process in the ways of "correlation" between Pa and the citizen and of services distribution; innovations that give a new concept of democratic participation to public life. ICTs, in fact, gives to community the chance to interacts directly and clearly with the public administrations' world .

The undoubted potentialities depending on the development of information societies will let the community grow only if technological innovation and spreading of knowledge go together. On one side, is very important to avoid social exclusion of people which are not able to deal with computer technology while, on the other, it is necessary to encourage an integrated and coordinate development of computerizing within the communes, to avoid the risk to have sections of national territory with a different grade of technological implementing.

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