Chapter 4

New Society and ICT Adoption:
A Link between Policy Network and Network Management

ABSTRACT

Academic ideas for network society have been articulated by diverse societal groups and communities. The emerging civil society in many parts of the globe is reflected through the power struggles of old and new political constellations and actions. Within this setting, the coalition of old regime and new regime of digital society is one of the most striking phenomena that can be observed that eventually give rise to the New Regulatory Regime (NRR). This chapter addresses the question of theoretical parameters that can be applied to analyse the critical juncture at which nation-states have arrived at the turn of the century in the march towards a networked society. The approach used in the chapter is to analyse the interplay of domestic and international influence factors in order to explain the current political discourse in digitalized technology.

INTRODUCTION

Researchers argued that the traditional approaches towards people’s engagement need to be changed to achieve success from governance reform initiatives (Jones et al., 2007; O’Flynn, 2007; Kanat and Ozkan, 2009). Throughout the 1990s, government intervention has been widely seen as a matter of survival, and with the growing convergence of the ICT sectors, the necessity for a new overall policy framework in the context of the establishment of the information society is generally recognised. Following the proliferation of the new multimedia and ICTs, a new metaphor emerged that impinged on modern societies – the network society (Castells, 1996; 2005). In their discussion about public actors and policy networks relationships, Klijn and Koppenjan (2000, 151-2), assert that network theory, by no means, presumes that governments are like other actors. Governments, according to them, have access to considerable resources, e.g. sizeable budgets and personnel, special powers, access to mass media, a monopoly on the use of force and democratic legitimisation, which in turn, gives them more power. However, these are not without limitations as and when they enter the network games with other network actors. Despite many problems with the aggregation of
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the multiple interests in the bargaining process, the proper deliberations of the negotiation process with private and semi-private partners can contribute to more meaningful interaction in policy networks. This Chapter is mainly concerned with the discussion of various issues related to the substance of the multiple intervention in the ICT sector. These include initiatives to encourage self-regulatory mechanisms and institutional regulatory reforms, etc., to promote the industry within the context of new governance.

THE NEW SOCIETY AND THE CHANGING ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

The role of national government is highly debated, but many agree that it is critical to ensure the success of the governance framework. It is proposed that the role of national government is the outcome rather than the process in which new social forms emerged. Castells and Cardoso (2006) conceptualised the network society whereby:

_Governance is operated in a network of political institutions that shares sovereignty in various degrees an reconfigurates itself in a variable political geometry... it is not the result of technological change, but the response to the structural contradiction between global system and national state._

In the context of network society, ICT has been thought to be the fundamental feature to help bridging the gap between government and social actors. The new phenomenon of ICT has redefined the meaning of a “new society.” Bang & Esmark (2009) argue that nation-states are being replaced by network states, which are “states embedded in local, regional, and global networks of governance hailed as necessary to meet the challenges of increased complexity, connectedness, and globalisation.” For Castells and Cardoso (2006), new information technologies allow the formation of new forms of social organisation and social interaction along electronically based information networks. Next, dimension of social change, affected by ICT, has a profound impact on economy – something that has never been possible to be handled by past forms of pre-ICT times. The pervasive impact of the ICT has created a dominant cultural manifestation which for Castells (2000), is characterised by an interactive, electronic hypertext, that “virtuality becomes a fundamental component of our symbolic environment, and thus of our experience as communication beings.” Another important axis of change is the demise of the sovereign nation-state. In this regard, the society is not losing the current feature of nation-states in their institutional existence. Rather, “their existence as power apparatuses is profoundly transformed, as they are either bypassed or rearranged in networks of shared sovereignty formed by national governments, supranational institutions, co-national institutions, e.g., European Union, NATO or NAFTA, regional governments, local governments, and NGOs” (ibid, 694). Last but not least, the culmination of scientific knowledge and the use of science are redefining the relationship between culture and nature. This is then “coincide in time: the revolution in information technology; the socio-economic restructuring of both capitalism and statism (with different fates for these antagonistic mode of production); and the cultural movements that emerged in the 1960s in the United States and Western Europe (ibid).”

The network society may retain its traditional forms but with newly emerging and rigorous techniques of intervention. Bang and Esmark (2009) argue that the shift has reoriented the political system from a focus that is principally one of politics to one of policy. When confronted with a network-like situation, governments may have few options (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000, 153-4). Firstly, they may choose not to join in network games; instead, to unilaterally impose their ideas and goals on other social actors. Certainly, this is not without some constraints, e.g. political support, effectiveness and efficiency of policy decisions.