Chapter 5

From Intelligent to Smart Cities: CoPs as Organizations for Developing Integrated Models of E-Government Services

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ABSTRACT

This chapter develops the notion of the intelligent city as the smart provider of electronically-enhanced services. Set within the ongoing debate about competitive cities, it identifies how the growing interest in the notion of intelligent cities has led universities to explore the possibilities of using ‘communities of practice’ (CoPs) as a way of drawing upon the work-based learning such knowledge-based organizations offer to be smart in developing integrated models of e-government (eGov) services. It reports on the attempts made by a consortium of leading European cities to use the intelligence of CoPs as the organizational means to be smart in developing models of eGov services capable of integrating the e-learning needs, knowledge transfer requirements, and capacity building commitments of their socially-inclusive and participatory urban regeneration programmes.

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INTRODUCTION

Made up of researchers, computer engineers, informational managers and public sector service providers, the IntelCities CoP has worked to develop an integrated model of eGov services. This paper suggests the workings of the IntelCities CoP are worth studying because, as a network, it provides an example of a virtual organization set up to manage the learning needs and knowledge requirements of eGov services which are not only socially-inclusive, but that are also participatory. What follows proposes CoPs of this kind i.e. those geared towards meeting the electronically-enhanced governance needs of socially-inclusive and participatory urban regeneration programmes, offer the means required to:

- meet the learning needs, knowledge transfer requirements and capacity building commitments of the organization;
- co-design them as a set of services that are socially inclusive and participatory and which allow their users to learn about the availability of such services, how to access them and the opportunities they offer everyone to become engaged with and get involved in meeting the knowledge transfer requirements and capacity building commitments of their urban regeneration programmes;
- monitor and evaluate such service developments as part of a good governance test.

As the paper establishes, it is the e-learning platform that makes it possible for the online services under development to be integrated with the knowledge transfer and capacity-building technologies which are needed for this CoP to work as a shared enterprise. Something that in turn allows the citizens and businesses making up the organization in question to collaborate and build consensus on the competencies, skills, and training which is needed to service the required online developments. Together, the innovation and creativity of the partnerships responsible for organizing the development of these capacities make it possible to engage citizens and show how the active participation of communities is both intelligent and smart.

The paper also suggests, the overarching theoretical significance of such partnerships should not be overlooked either. Because as the following review of the on-going debate over competitive cities shall highlight, intelligent cities offer an index of the innovations CoPs have made to ensure the eGov services currently under development align competitiveness with the cohesive qualities of socially-inclusive policy agendas. It also goes on to suggest the overall significance of this realignment lies in the opportunity such a policy agenda offers to begin answering some of the big questions Harloe (2001:896) asks of the “ongoing debate”. In particular, some of the big questions this policy agenda raises about “competitiveness, exclusion, cohesion and social inclusion (ibid)”. In addressing this emerging policy agenda, the paper begins by studying the ongoing debate over competitive cities and goes on to examine CoPs as the institutional basis that have emerged to make competition less exclusionary and offer cities the organizational means by which to be cohesive and socially-inclusive. Having done this, it goes on to identify the two types of interaction that cultivate such qualities and which point towards the contribution online service developments make to such socially-inclusive and participatory practices. From here the paper goes on to study the defining features of the IntelCities CoP and integrated model of eGov services developed by this organization as part of their online service developments. This draws particular attention to the attempts made by this organization to realize the socially-inclusive and participatory virtues of such online service developments. That is by way of and through the technical platforms and semantically-interoperable content of the eGov services which have been developed as part of