Smart working public organisations driving innovation

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Abstract. Public organisations drive collaborative innovation and contribute to value creation by developing the potential of information technology. Public organisations support a smart working mind set to enhance collaborative innovation. Smart public organisations support smart working as a way to drive collaborative innovation. The study is theoretical and relies on a literature review and analysis related to public organisations that aim to drive innovation by embracing information technology.

Keywords: collaborative innovation, public organisations, smart working, information technology.

1. Introduction

Today, the advent of emerging information and communication technology is driving innovation-oriented public organisations, leading to digital, smart and agile government. Public organisations are following a service logic view to public value creation [1] and public value management view [2], rethinking on smart and sustainable visions, driving public decision-making, management and governance [3, 4], and promoting cooperation and social exchange with civil society and governance networks within social ecosystems [5], supporting innovative collaboration [6]. Smart and sustainable organisations perform better [7, 8], promoting collaborative relationships and innovation within work environments [9]. Smartness has become a desirable outcome and key source for sustainability. Innovation is rising at the top of public agenda reform, and offers a satisfying solution to emerging problems. Information and communication technology is opening up to smart working public organisations [10], promoting public innovation through collaborative processes that involve private and public organisations to support value creation [11]. The advent of information technology supports open and public innovation within a networked governance [12, 13], and helps public organisations to communicate with citizens, enabling them as active co-producers of social, democratic and public value [14]. Smart government supports modernisation by digitalising processes in the public sector and rethinking the way

government works [15]. Advanced technology and digitalisation in government is leading to smart public organisations working for effective innovation [10].

The advent of a new *coronavirus* (Sars-Cov2) able to infect also the humans, causing, in particular, many cases of pneumonia, was opening to the rise of *Covid-19* that was leading to a worldwide pandemic health crisis which impacted on the life of people and organisations, driving companies to redesign the organisational arrangements, accelerating digitalisation, and enabling information technology as a key source for change management and innovation. The organisational responses to the advent of pandemic *Covid-19* refer to the use of information technology at work as enabled by information technology in transitioning from telework and remote working to smart or agile working as a space for collaboration by revisiting the work organisation and leading to an increase of remote working, teleworking and online working, supporting smart working practices and organisational redesign during the most acute phase of pandemic health crisis [16, 17].

During pandemic *Covid-19* health crisis, the smart or agile working was emerging as innovative phenomenon and work design experiment, becoming part of a process of profound cultural and organisational changes [18], empowering managers and followers to improve the information technology-enabled work relationships [19]. While teleworking implies to work at a distance from the company's main office and the use of information technology in response to energy crisis in the early '70s [20, 21], the pandemic-enabled digital response is leading to smart working organisations. Developing smart working helps support the SDGs no. 3, no. 5, no. 8 and no. 11 (ensuring health and well-being, achieving gender equality, promoting sustainable and inclusive growth and employment, and helping the development of sustainable cities and communities).

The aim of this study is to elucidate how public organisations are becoming smart working organisations that support collaborative innovation. Public organisations adopt a service logic view, enabling the service users to actively contribute to value creation [1], and driving the service co-production within communities as a means to support innovation [12, 22, 23]. Technology helps public organisations to develop open innovation and support public value creation processes within communities and open ecosystems in the pursuit of public goals [24, 25]. The paper is conceptual. It proposes an interpretative view on social, organisational and technological issues emerging in relation to pandemic crisis, and considering the opportunities in terms of collaboration and innovation at work. The paper is structured in sixth sections. Following the introduction and methodological section, in the third paragraph the role of information technology leading to smart public organisations is elucidated. In the fourth paragraph, the debate on public innovation is conducted through the lens of collaborative innovation as theoretical background. In the fifth paragraph, the smart working supports collaborative innovation within work environments. Finally, discussion and conclusions are outlined.

2. Methodological section

The study is theoretical and relies on a literature review and analysis related to public organisations that aim to drive innovation by embracing information technology in order to develop smartness, by enabling smart working as collaborative innovation, strengthening digital and smart platforms to contribute to public value creation. The research is exploratory and considers some fields of the study on public organisations. The role of digital and interactive information and communication technology is relevant for understanding the role of innovation within organisations. The use of information technology concerns both the fields of research related to public innovation. The concept of smartness is rising with regards to the advent of agile and smart working practices within work relationships. The study refers to the analysis of articles referred to collaborative public innovation. Some articles are considered with regards to the concept of smartness and sustainability in public organisations. The smart working theme is considered as a field of experimentation within public organisations that are driving innovation by investing in smart solutions to address public value creation. The selected contributions are drawn by the literature related to smart public organisations working for driving innovative collaboration by using digital and advanced information technology. The selected contributions are interpreted in a narrative synthesis in order to elucidate new perspectives and advance theoretical frameworks on emerging issues [26, 27].

3. Towards smart public organisations

Public organisations use information technology to transform the relationships with public service users, enhancing the co-production within the service delivery system as a relational process [28]. Digitalisation is leading to smart organisations that are capable to manage complexity by using simplicity, intelligence and collaboration [17]. Public organisations are developing digital and smart platforms and collaborative spaces to enable value creation processes within social ecosystems [1, 29]. Digital transformation supports change and innovation in public sector organisations through organisational design, work processes, cultural orientation to results and customer satisfaction. Digital transformation relies on skills and competences of employees and managers too [30]. Technology helps public organisations to become more agile, flexible and adaptive organisations [31]. Digitalisation processes in government support cooperation, engagement and participation in policy-making and services design [32]. Technology helps to drive a community/citizen centred approach to public services design [33], empowering the citizen as a responsible partner in co-production of public services [34], and enabling virtual communities to enhance networked co-production and value co-creation [35]. Smart and innovative public organisations are using information technology in order to improve the quality of life, interacting with citizens and engaging them to participate and co-produce new services [36]. Smart government means rethinking the way governments work by digital-

ising processes through the use of information technology and relying also on perceptions and expectation of public managers for success or failure. Smart government initiatives require both innovativeness and collaboration [15]. Information technology catalyses innovations in government leading to public administration as a smart organisation able to achieve agile and resilient government and governance infrastructure [37]. Innovation is a key dimension that characterises smartness in government. [10]. As key components of government administrative reform, information technologies are leading to a smart State, by strengthening inter-organisational collaboration, information sharing and integration [38]. The advent of interactive and digital information technology helps public organisations to foster private-public collaborations and partnerships, strengthening a community/citizen and smart approach, by involving citizens in policy-making for sustaining public values, equity and development [25, 33]. Sustainable, digital and smart public organisations involve private and public actors, developing knowledge and capabilities in the pursuit of public goals [24, 25, 39]. Public organisations support public value creation, promoting driven e-governance platforms and constructing multiple relationships to develop co-innovation where the locus of co-production is the service system [40, 41]. As enablers of social and public value creation, digital and smart public organisations are following a service logic and public value view, promoting interaction and citizen-centred services effectiveness by involving civil society [1, 2, 5, 10, 15].

4. Driving collaborative innovation

Public innovation is viewed as a continuous improvement [12]. Innovation refers both to a discontinuity with the past, and to development and implementation of new ideas that disrupt the common wisdom [42]. Innovation relies on doing in new ways and rethinking about problems [43]. Innovation refers to intentional and proactive processes for breeding new and creative ideas [44]. Recently, the Italian PNRR (National Recovery and Resilience Plan) is leading to policies for innovation within public organisations. Public sector innovation develops through collaborative processes that involve public and private organisations, and facilitate value co-creation processes [11]. Collaborative innovation helps to transform government in a significant way [45], bringing together both a similarity of education and values among the actors and diversity of views and ideas as necessary sources to stimulate creative problem solving [6]. Ensuring trust and legitimacy of government is an important driver for public sector innovation [46]. Collaborative innovation opens up to actors from within the organisation, other organisations, the private and third sector and citizens that are integrated in the innovation cycle [47]. Collaborative innovation relies on engaging the actors in a trust-based dialogue in order to engender innovative solutions [6]. Collaborative innovation for public value creation relies on managers who are capable to involve several actors in the collaborative framework and relies on leaders who foster innovation [43]. Public sector innovation relates to collaborative interaction among public and private actors such as politicians, civil servants, private firms and commu-

nity-based associations [44]. Digital public service innovation supports value co-creation and the development of public-private partnerships [48]. The advent of digital and interactive information technology helps to strengthen collaborative public services co-production, leading to open public innovation [49]. Developing the potential offered by information technology is opening to unexpected and favourable organisational and behavioural issues [50]. Digital government systems are driving collaborative processes [51]. Digital public innovation develops in a collaborative way, and relies on employees as explorers of new innovation opportunities, meeting the users and involving them to play an active role in the innovation process. Technology helps open innovation-driven public organisations to include external knowledge in decision-making processes [13]. Digital public service innovation helps the development of public-private partnerships by engaging the citizens and the community [34].

5. Smart working for collaborative innovation

Today, working by developing the potential offered by information technology refers to smart or agile working. The work as enabled by technology should be always smart. Smart working is emerging as an innovative approach to work organisation and human resource management [52]. Public organisations are experimenting the widespread usage of technological advancements in order to offer their employees new ways of working, overcoming physical and time barriers, designing work organisation modes based on telework, home-based telework, mobile work [53], and embracing a smart working approach in redefining the work organisation in order to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, and to enhance flexibility and autonomy, promoting collaboration [54]. Driving smart working helps to develop results-driven and collaboration-oriented organisations, strengthening the role of managers who are empowering the employees at work and sharing with them the organisational goals by following a collaborative approach [55].

Smart and agile work or ubiquitous working is conceived as a way that enables a new view to work organisation which may benefit both the employee, ensuring a smart work-life balance, and the organisation, improving costs reduction and driving productivity improvement. Smart work is results-oriented, social and collaborative, and refers to a networked way of operating [56]. Smart working refers to organisational models that shape the relationships between the individual and the organisation, and propose autonomy in working methods for the achievement of results. It relies on an intelligent rethinking of the way by which work activities are carried out [57]. Digitalisation helps to enhance collaborative spaces and blended forms of work with regards to physical, digital and relational aspects [58]. Smart working helps to support cultural change and requires organisational innovation for which a detailed roadmap must be provided [18]. Smart working is defined as a new management philosophy based on providing employees with freedom and flexibility in choosing the place, time and tools used in their work, in conditions of greater responsibility and account-

ability for results. Smart working supports social collaboration and requires managers who are able to promote a sense of community, empowerment and flexibility. Organisational policies, technology, physical layout and leadership behaviours and styles exert influence on the successful smart working practices and approaches [59]. Adopting smart working practices helps to support larger autonomy and foster confidence and propensity towards innovation [60]. Smart working practices are agile, dynamic and emergent value creating relationships that benefit the organisation and people [61].

The rise and widespread diffusion of smart working-oriented practices is opening to a new smart workplace as a collaborative space, driving employees to handle technology for strengthening interaction and collaboration, and reinforcing shared norms, goals and identification. Smart working helps to foster openness-driven and knowledge-exchange-oriented smart organisational culture in work environments. Promoting smart working practices helps to rethink a new workplace which is deliberately designed to produce changing attitudes and behaviours of both employees and their managers. Smart working is emerging as a collaborative space for flexible work [62]. Smart working helps to drive organisational innovation and support cultural change [18]. As a new way of interpreting the work, the smart working allows better balance between quality of life and individual productivity, and focuses on integration and collaboration between people, in particular, and between organisations, in general. It is an intrinsically multidisciplinary revolution which requires integrated governance among the players involved [63]. The role of management is essential to drive high performance and satisfaction of employees working by information and communication technology between home and office. In particular, managers have a delicate task in recalibrating perceptions of the boundaries between home and work in order to develop positive employee relationships [19]. Working by technology enhances the role of middles managers [20]. Telework helps to foster autonomy, leading to self-management of employees and driving managers to redefine their role in terms of coaching than control. Promoting leadership for smart working supports flexibility, coherence and integration [64].

6. Discussion and conclusions

Technological advancements are driving innovation in public organisations and changing the way the employees and the organisations relate to workplace management. Digital transformation in public sector relies on collaborative innovation that supports smartness and empowerment at work. Innovation always concerns the life and development of public organisations. Public organisations are developing digital platforms in order to contribute to innovation by involving civil society within networked governance. The information and digital technology enables public organisations to identify a smart way to redesign the work organisation by developing the human capital. Smart public organisations contribute to value creation processes, developing the potential of information technology by empowering people, enhancing

smart working as a collaborative space that enables innovation in work processes, leading to innovative behaviours and attitudes of employees, managers, citizens and other stakeholders involved in the collaborative processes. Smart working public organisations support innovation through digital platforms and adopt the smart working as a way to enhance collaborative innovation and processes.

As shown in Figure 1, the main contribution of this study is to identify some pathways that enable public organisations to develop information technology in order to become smart organisations able to contribute to public value creation and support the development of communities in long-term horizon, promoting the transition from technology-enabled working to smart working, implementing the digitalisation processes, and identifying an innovation orientation to processes and services, by promoting organisational and cultural changes in long-term.

Figure 1 – Towards smart public organisations

	from technology-enabled working	to smart working
from organisation	Technology-enabled Public Organisations	Smart-driven Public Organisations
to collaborative spaces	Innovation-oriented Public Organisations	Smart innovative Public Organisations
	from technology in government	to digital platforms

Smart innovative public organisations shape collaborative spaces, using digital platforms to enable smart working as a way to drive collaborative innovation that relies on involving the communities within social ecosystems. Public organisations are rethinking a smart view to work processes and services delivery and production, following a service logic view to public services delivery and design within communities. Technology helps to drive collaborative innovation, enhancing organisational, social and human dimensions, and enabling managers and employees to develop collaboration, knowledge sharing and empowerment.

In this study, there are some limitations. This study identifies only a theoretical framework of analysis in order to understand the pathway leading to smart and innovative public organisations by using the potential of information technology in order to support cooperative and collaborative processes, and promote public-private partnerships, and drive smart working as a change vision to drive innovation in work processes. Thereby, any empirical research and case studies are provided in the analysis because public organisations are still in infancy in rethinking and reshaping a smart mind set and planning about how to deal with smartness and sustainability as key drivers and sources of organisational change and innovation. Further research perspectives and investigations will consider how the hypothesized propositions can be applied within local autonomies and be translated in managerial and leadership

training programs, in human resources policies and practices, and how technological advancements and digital platforms may contribute to enhancing the community and collaborative spaces development within public organisations.

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