Will The Future of Public Administrations Be Innovative Though Disruptive?
Insights from Wallonia

Vincent Calay
Jean-Luc Guyot
Maxime Petit Jean

Hyp1: Innovation as a paradigm

Innovation is now defined as a new paradigm to reform public administrations at various levels as observed in many OECD countries.
Hyp2: A Response to the Risk Society

Innovation (as a paradigm) is a response to the emergence of a complex, uncertain, risky, though reflexive society

« The imperative to engage in reflexive deliberations (which may also involve interpersonal as well as intra-subjective exchanges) derives, quite simply, from the absence of social guidelines indicating what to do in novel situations. It is tempting to write 'in new games', but for the fact that not even the constitutive rules let alone the regulative ones are fully formed. »

(Archer, 2012 : 1-2)

Hyp3: A Response to a Digitized Society

Innovation is a response to a digitized society where data proliferate, knowledge improves and where emerges « the multitude »

Source: www.innokyla.fi
Innovation as a framework for action in a Reflexive Society

How will it affect the framing of action in current bureaucracies?

The Reflexive Public Administration

The need for public innovation can be defined as the search for new ideas and concepts, technologies, techniques and methods, forms, systems and procedures to create meaningful interactions between the government and society in order to deal with a number of societal challenges.

Source: Bekkers, Edelenbos, et Steijn (2011: 6)
The Issues

✓ To what extent, is innovation able to shape the future of public administration?

✓ What is the current culture of innovation in public administrations?

✓ Is this culture able to support an evolution of how administrative action will be conducted?

✓ If so, is this evolution able to support a global transformation of public administrations in their design and conception?

The Objectives

✓ Build a locally grounded background for the scenario development process

✓ Assessing the current culture of innovation inside the main local public administration

✓ Setting up an inductive method based on how local civil servants perceive the reality of innovation
The Questions

- What do the civil servants call « innovation »?
- How do they describe innovation processes?
- Which issues do they identify in innovation processes?
- What are the factors that influence innovation?
- What motivates innovation?
- What are the obstacles to innovation?
- What are the meanings of innovation?

The Method

- Exploratory workshops with 60 stakeholders
- Online Survey in two rounds (inspired by Delphi)
- 400 experts in « ordinary » innovations surveyed
- Self-selection process: why?
  - No proper innovation strategy / « experts » not clearly identified
  - Support our objective of a grounded/reflexive approach to innovation
Results of the Survey

✔ Who are the experts?
  • A majority of 1st Class Civil Servant (Grade A)
  • With a University Degree
  • From every departments
  • With no management function
  • Self-defined as effective or potential innovator
  • A small minority in the local administration (4%)
  • Often with a strong technical background

The call for innovation

There is a strong call for innovation amongst the population surveyed but with 3 different perspectives

![Pie chart showing percentages of responses to innovation-related questions]
The room for manœuvre

There is a strong impact of a culture of control that limits the capacity to innovate and disempower civil servants.

The organisationnal dynamics

The hierarchical control and the quality of leadership crucially affect the empowerment of innovation within the organisation.
What motivates innovation?

- At the organisationnal level, innovation improves the global quality and efficiency of the service rendered to the citizen.
- At the individual level, innovation empowers the civil servants in their daily work.

What kinds of innovations?

- Top-down
- Breakthrough
- Incremental
- Bottom-up
Three generations of innovation cumulated

- **The Bureaucratic Administration**
  - Top-down structure
  - Innovation by reforms
  - Security and reproduction
  - Abstract user

- **The Optimized Administration**
  - Top-down structure
  - Innovation by optimization
  - Efficiency and quality
  - Client

- **The Reflexive Administration**
  - Hybrid structure (mix bottom-up and top-down)
  - Innovation by projects
  - Satisfaction of the citizens needs
  - Co-producer

Innovation as a driver for the future of public administrations

- **Top-down**
  - The Start Up Administration
  - The Fab Lab Administration

- **Breakthrough**
  - The Creative Administration

- **Bottom-up**
  - The Experimental Administration

- **Incremental**
  - The Palimpsest Administration
Thank you for your attention!
Any questions?

v.calay@iweps.be