

Preface

Information technology (IT) plays a key role in private organizations and is part of the business strategy, asking for IT leaders capable to effectively plan and manage IT resources of an organization that are including technology infrastructure, human resources and business/IT relationships (Brown et al. 2012). Furthermore, IT has also a pervasive role in society and public sphere, thus having a lot to offer to public organizations as well, which should be able to capture and govern the opportunities for internal change and new services offering. In fact, public organizations can benefit the most by using IT to achieve organization's strategies and improve their services. According to Campbell et al. (2009, p.7), “public sector organizations are a collection of a nation’s administrative and economic institutions that provide services and goods for and on behalf of the government”, and these types of organizations are dependent on governmental budget funding. In opinion of Hoch and Payan (2008), IT governance is a critical capability for the leaders in the public sector that are looking to create IT value. Furthermore, public organizations are now very committed to make more steps towards digitalization and transform their services. Therefore, this requires from organization’s management to focus on having an effective IT governance in their organization that as result will enable business/IT alignment and will create business value from IT investments. For this purpose, organization’s management has given a special attention to IT governance that has grown in importance. IT governance or enterprise governance of IT is defined as “an integral part of enterprise governance exercised by the board and address the definition and implementation of processes, structures and relational mechanisms in the organization that enable both business and IT people to execute their responsibilities in support of business/IT alignment and the creation of business value from IT-enabled business investments” (De Haes and Van Grembergen , p. 2). In fact, business/IT alignment is “the fit and integration among business strategy, IT strategy, business structures and IT structures” and is “an important driving force to achieve business value through investments in IT” (Van Grembergen and De Haes (2009, p. 6). According to Leonard and Seddon (2012), business/IT alignment is considered to be a key issue for organizations and is still the first top management concern for executives in organizations around the world

based on the findings of the annual study of IT key issues and trends done by Society for Information Management in 2015 (Kappelman et al. 2016). Furthermore, Weill and Ross (2004, pp. 3–4) point out that “effective IT governance is the single most important predictor of the value an organization generates from IT”, where by effective IT governance Weill and Ross (2004, pp. 2–3) mean “an actively designed set of IT governance mechanisms (e.g. committees, budgeting processes, approvals, IT organizational structure, chargeback, etc.) that encourage behaviour consistent with the organization’s mission, strategy, values, norms and culture”.

As we noticed, also the research in IT governance in public organizations has growth in importance and different research studies have been reported in this topic both in developed and developing countries (see, e.g., Parfitt and Tryfonas 2009; Nfuka and Rusu 2013). In a study done by Winkler (2013, p. 843) about IT governance mechanisms in the public sector in Germany, the author has found that “that structural and relational mechanisms are important means to achieve alignment between administration departments and IT units”, but on the other hand, the findings “provide no clear evidence for the influence exerted by procedural mechanisms”. Apart from these findings, Winkler (2013, p. 844) has mentioned “the importance of relational networks for IT alignment especially in a public sector context”. Considering public sector investments in ICT-enabled services, the consequent innovations have different effects according to different governance mechanisms adopted in specific policy domains and governance settings, thus producing different types of change, spanning from technical/incremental change to transformative/disruptive/radical change through organizational/sustained change (Misuraca and Viscusi 2015).

Thus, different challenges are coming for researchers in studying IT governance in public organizations due to the differences between political, administrative and practices in these organizations. Moreover, Hoch and Payan (2008) have noticed that in the public sector the IT projects are complicated with requirements and goals that are including political objectives not only economical ones. Furthermore, the trend towards digital governance in public sector creates other challenges like those mentioned by Misuraca and Viscusi (2014) as the policy-maker’s innovation dilemma. These challenges are related to governance processes and policy-making mechanisms change due to the application of information and communication technology (ICT)-enabled innovation. Hence, the dilemma is actually related to governance and alignment issues between policy ICT-enabled initiatives and the diverse stakeholders they involve. Indeed, as pointed out by Misuraca and Viscusi (2014, p. 146), we could imagine a government that does everything by this book (following the rule of law, managing by facts, being disciplined about costs and quality, etc.), but, for example, miss in listening to citizens and not being able to engage properly with them, not being capable of anticipating unexpected situations, or other, and thus can get blindsided by an “innovation” that rapidly takes away its sphere of power in the governance space, because it was doing everything right, but

not coping with the transformations happening in the society surrounding its machinery.

Taking the above issues into account, the research in IT governance in public organizations has already captured the attention of researchers, policy-makers and IT practitioners due to the challenges we have mentioned above. This book's primary contribution will be to highlight the actual trends and challenges in research in IT governance in public organizations with the aim to report innovative research and new insights in the theories, models and practices in this research topic. In what follows an outline of the main contents of this book is discussed, in order to provide the reader with a "map" orienting his/her on the chapters better fitting his/her practice or research interests and needs. Obviously, the reader may also decide to go through the different arguments following the structure we have provided for this book.

Outline of the Book

IT governance as a research topic has been investigated from different disciplinary perspectives, whose contributions were most of the time parallel with some overlapping or integrations by the above-cited key authors. This characteristic of the research on IT governance has been inherited also by its study in public organizations as a specific domain of analysis. In this book, we have classified the diverse contributions in the following macro-areas: "Management", "Modelling" and "Cases", which represent the three parts of the volume. We now briefly discuss them through the topics of their chapters.

In Part I (Management) of this book, an introduction to IT governance in public organizations is provided by Edimara et al., discussing the diverse purposes with regard to private organizations, the specific needs, drivers and mechanisms. Subsequently, Rusu and Jonathan investigate a close and often complementary topic of IT governance: IT alignment in public organizations. Through a systematic literature review, the authors aim to clarify the key issues and difference of the subject when treated in a different domain than the business one, especially with regard to organizational performance and the role of organizational structure, culture and social interactions. Caffrey and McDonagh further analyse these issues, by focusing on the roles of middle managers in aligning strategy and IT in public service organizations. Then, Lundström and Edenius analyse alignment and governance with regard to IT-related policy decisions, providing insights into the impact of their implementation and how the consequent change of seemingly mundane activities creates the evolution of new structures and practices. Focusing on routines and practices at micro-level, this paper indirectly poses a set of questions for the role of modeling in IT governance in public organizations.

In Part II (Modeling) of this book, Rychkova and Zdravkovic consider the challenges faced by public administration, actually asked to respond to the increasing service demand and the need for co-production by the renewed and growing engagement of citizens and partner organizations due to the digitalization at societal level and the development of open government initiatives. To this end, the authors propose a model based on the theory of public value and the notion of capability suitable to support public organizations in positioning, justifying and governing their IT projects. Besides this model, the subsequent chapter by Gómez et al. discusses a framework for IT governance implementation suitable to improve alignment and communication between the stakeholders of IT services in public organizations and especially in public enterprises, totally or partially owned by a state, who control them through a public authority. Considering modelling challenges and benefits of IT governance in public organizations is then connected to what are key themes in IT practice and information systems engineering, that are (i) the design and implementation of IT architecture, analysed by Henkel et al., and (ii) the adoption of enterprise architecture in public organizations, whose root causes and suitable solutions are discussed by Dang and Pekkola.

Finally, Part III (Cases) of this book is dedicated to the discussion of case studies of IT governance in public organizations in order to provide an ideal yet contextual counterpart to perspectives presented in the first two parts of the volume. Thus, Bailey et al. discuss IT governance in the context of e-government strategies implementation in the Caribbean, providing a critical assessment through the discussion of successes, challenges and the adoption of new technologies in the area. Furthermore, Aasi et al. consider the relationship of IT organizational structure and IT governance performance, considering the case of the IT department of a public research and education organization in a developing country. The last two chapters consider the case of two managerial and organizational issues. First, Magnusson et al. investigate the relationship between organizational ambidexterity and IT governance through a case study of the Swedish Tax Authorities. The contribution aims to provide empirical insights on the phenomenon of ambidextrous IT governance, spanning the boundaries between disciplines such as organization science and information systems. Finally, Langsten and Nordström investigate the role of institutional logics in IT projects activities and interactions in a large Swedish hospital, thus questioning the implication of the institutional logics perspective for IT governance.

We hope that the reader will find interesting the journey through IT governance in public organizations, exploring the sketches of a still developing map made up on the arguments discussed by the chapters of this book.

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