Chapter XV
Understanding the Supply Side:
ICT Experience of Marmara
Region, Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Marmara region's local governments in Turkey are setting the benchmark for the country in the implementation of spatial information systems and e-governance. The chapter aims to shed light on organizational realities of recent practices of information systems and technologies based on the evidences from selected local government organizations in the Marmara region. This chapter scrutinizes these practices and discusses the pivotal relationship between the information and communication technologies and its local organizational context within the region. The chapter also exemplifies challenges and opportunities of the Marmara as an emerging information and communication technology-supported region by illustrating the specific information and communication technology supply instruments. The chapter reveals that the particular success in supply side does not guarantee the sustainable information and communication technology implementation. There are other concerns including demand side that are strongly linked to a realistic understanding of end user demand, the institutional capacity of respected organizations, public-private partnership, and the joined-up policy efforts at both national and local levels.

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are essential components of the knowledge economy, and have an immense complementary role in innovation, education, knowledge creation, and relations with government, civil society, and business within the city-regions. The ability to create, distribute, and exploit knowledge has become a major source of competitive advantage, wealth creation, and improvements in the new regional policies. Growing impact of ICT on the economy and society, rapid application of recent scientific advances in new products and processes, shifting to a more knowledge-intensive industry and services, and rising skill requirements have become crucial concepts for urban and regional competitiveness. Therefore, harnessing ICT for knowledge-based development has become a major issue for urban and regional growth (Carrillo, 2006).

Since the Helsinki European Council announced Turkey as a candidate for the European Union (EU) full membership in 1999, the candidacy process has accelerated the speed of the regional policy enhancements and adoption of the European regional policy standards. These enhancements and adoptions include: generation of a new regional spatial division—NUTS-II statistical regions; new legislation on the establishment of 'regional development agencies' (RDAs); and new orientations in the field of high education, science, and technology within the framework of the EU's Lisbon Strategy and the Bologna Process standards, which posed an ambitious new agenda in the development and application of contemporary regional policy in Turkey. In this sense, novel regional policies in Turkey endeavor to include information society objectives and creation of knowledge-based development through efficient use of new technologies such as ICTs. Such a development seeks to be based on 'tangible assets' of the region (i.e., organized

civil society; quality of urban infrastructure; region's human, intellectual, creative, and natural assets) as well as the best practices deriving from grounding initiatives at urban and regional levels (see Friedmann, 2006).

An ICT-supported region can be thought of as the one that capitalizes on the opportunities presented by various ICTs in promoting its prosperity and sustainable development. From a technological perspective, it is the region's capability to integrate the opportunities and challenges coming from the latest technologies to the regional development (Pfirrmann, 2003; Gricar, 2007). With promising implementations in harnessing ICTs, Marmara region's (see Figure 1) city governments in Turkey are setting the benchmark for the country towards an ICT-supported region. Therefore, the chapter aims to shed light on organizational and regional realities of recent practices of ICT applications (i.e., information systems and e-government) and their supply instruments based on evidences from selected local government organizations in the Marmara region. This chapter also exemplifies challenges and opportunities of the region's ICT experience, and provides a concise review of different ICT applications and strategies in a broader urban and regional context.

The chapter consists of three sections. The following section scrutinizes some background concepts on urban ICT policies and ICTs for city governments in developmental context. Then public sector ICT applications and supply instruments are elaborated in the framework of the Marmara region. Marmara's opportunities and challenges in moving towards an ICT-supported region are also discussed. Subsequently the last section discusses that particular success stories in the supply side do not guarantee sustainable ICT implementation. There are other factors including demand side that cover a realistic understanding of end user demand—businesses, institutions, individuals, or society as a whole; the institutional capacity of

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