The Open Administration of Catalonia

Introduction

Administrations are traditionally particularly complex organisations, at least from the point of view of the citizens and the organisations they are in, whether companies or associations. Effectively, what citizens know as "The Administration", is in reality three organisations that are quite different in many respects: the General Administration of the State, the Administration of the Autonomous Community (the *Generalitat* in Catalonia's case) and the Local Administration (we are referring to the 947 Municipalities in Catalonia). In their turn, each of these is broken down into Ministries, Regional Ministries, autonomous bodies and other off-shoots that are either part of these or collaborators. Added to this complex network are organisations oriented towards serving the municipalities, like the County Councils (or *Diputaciones*) and in Catalonia, the "Comarca" Councils ("comarcas" are an administrative division comprised of municipalities).

In any case, citizens and also companies will interact in one way or another throughout their lives with all three of these administrations. Thus for example, the jurisdiction corresponding to general fiscal policies and identity is the Central Administration, but on several occasions we may have to communicate with the equivalent of Inland Revenue (Ministry of the Economy and Treasury) and the Civil Registry (Ministry of Justice). Many of the powers for Health and Education have been transferred to the Autonomous Communities, and to this effect, when we go to a health centre or a public teaching centre, we are doing it with the corresponding regional ministries; and finally the City Council is the organism that we must normally go to for procedures such as registration, municipal taxes and works licenses. The integration among the processes of the three administrations is often very limited. This fact leads citizens being requested information by one Administration, for information that another Administration already has. Thus, it is the citizen - using his time and energy – who ends up "integrating" the information required by the Administration in order to provide their service.

Although the Administration has progressively been applying information and communication technologies to their processes and internal procedures, the reality is that the way citizens interact with the Administration continues, to a large part, revolving around such outdated means as paper and printers. Thus, habitual terms related to these procedures, such as certified, documentation, instance or query, refer to or produce, documents in paper mediums and the term "red tape" is commonly associated with dealing with the Administration. And while it is common in the relationship between citizens and companies to use credit cards, electronic and telephone banking, Internet transactions, mobile telephones and SMS messaging, the relations between citizens and the Administration are still scarce that use channels provided by New Information and Communication Technologies (NICT).

Clearly, this situation is changing and it still must change a lot more. And there are powerful reasons for this. Not only markets and social customs will apply positive pressure on the Administration so that they start using NICT to an ever greater extent in their relations with citizens. An organisation whose raw material is basically Information (as is the case of the Administration) cannot remain outside of or immune to the greatest technological revolution that has ever existed precisely in information technologies. Don't forget that the medium most used in the Administration (paper) was precisely the centre of the previous great technological revolution in the sphere of information. Furthermore, and we are neither the first nor the only ones to make this observation: the Administration should play a role in exemplifying and promoting the social applications of the NICT, both from their positions as economic engines and facilitators. The Administration must have an essential role in the construction of the Information Society.

Strategy and Tactics

To deal with these challenges in Catalonia, an initiative called Open Administration in Catalonia (OAC) has been started. Its oldest antecedent is found in the Strategic Plan "Catalonia on the Net", which was presented in April 1999 with the collaboration of the public administrations, companies, universities and all Catalan agencies. The objective of this strategic plan is to analyse the reality and possibilities in Catalonia for developing infrastructures and introducing information and communication technologies in the fields of education and culture, administration, health and the entirety of business activities, in order to establish the bases and define the actions that will allow Catalonia to achieve an avant-garde position.

After defining the strategy, the tactical definition followed for what the e-government's actions would be. On the 23rd of July of 2001, the Catalan Parliament signed the 'Pact for the Promotion and Development of the Information Society in Catalan Public Administrations', an agreement between all political powers with parliamentary representation and the administrations closest to the citizens: the local administration (grouped into a syndicate of local entities, Localret) and the autonomous administration (the Catalonia *Generalitat*). This document has already detailed what Catalonia must do in upcoming years:
- Create a Catalan Certification Agency made up of key public figures in Catalonia.
- Create a Portal for the Catalan Administrations that will allow for on-line transactions with the Administration.
- Create a Catalan Agency for Data Protection.
- Establish a network of sites for public access to the Internet.
- Establish an action plan for training public employees.
- Create an Observatory for the Information Society.

This plan also has a roadmap for upcoming years and for financial allocations that will allow the defined objectives to be achieved adequately.

As a consequence of the Institutional Pact at the beginning of 2002, the Catalonia Autonomous Government and the syndicate of local entities Localret created the Catalonia Electronic Open Administration Syndicate. The Open Administration of Catalonia represents an in-depth change in the relations between citizens and the Administration and to do this, a new model is being promoted that is based on the intensive usage – coordinated and integrated – of the NICT in all the Administration's processes and procedures. This Syndicate has created two bodies to carry out their objectives: the Catalan Certification Agency (CatCert) and Electronic Public Services, PLC (CAT365).

Citizen viewpoint

Adopting the citizen viewpoint must be one of the key aspects of any process that intends to improve relations between this group and the Administration. This redundancy, while seeming obvious, is often forgotten and it is not unusual for the on-line services that the Administration starts making available to the citizens to present a great heterogeneity in formats and content, if not neglecting to update or simply not being useful. If to this we add the still scarce Internet penetration (the majority in Spain have still never used the Web) and that often Portals from different administrations better reflect the structure of the institutions than the priorities and interests of the public, we encounter the first series of obstacles that must be overcome.

But even supposing that each and every one of the administration carried out "their duties", strengthening public access to the Web and optimising accessibility and usability of their portals, there is still a long road to travel: that of integrating the services of the different administrations. In any other way, we would only be projecting the current structure of the different administrations onto the Web, that having their legal and political sides, would not necessarily adapt (once again) to the needs and priorities of the citizens.

And even using the word "client" for the citizen-administration relations can cause the danger to some of forgetting that in these relations, the citizen is subject both to rights and to duties (and it is clear this mustn't happen), we believe that the positive meaning of client as a receptor of services must be taken, and take advantage of the experience that in this sense, the private company has been acquiring, and very singularly, banking, in client-provider service relationships. Thus, the following must be considered:

- Maximum accessibility to services, both from a viewpoint of times available and the different channels that offer services (personal, telephone, Internet, interactive TV,...). This remote access must also allow the expansion of personal service points close to the citizen, with the management of these offices being irrelevant.

- Extension to all channels, of the culture of quality service: this includes not only client/citizen satisfaction but also their participation in the determination and improvement of their own services. In this

way, the Public Administration must adapt their offer to the demands of the citizens and not inversely.

- Add to and integrate both information and services, independently of the jurisdictions of who provides these (the different administrations).

The administration viewpoint

In order to make all of the above possible, it is evident that intensive and extensive work is needed on the part of all the administrations to assume as challenges, all those that citizens expect from the Administration as receivers of the services being provided. Thus, the following is necessary:

- An exhaustive reengineering of all the internal processes of the Administration oriented towards redesigning and simplifying the same in all aspects that affects interaction with citizens.

- Make interconnection possible between the databases of the different administrations so that, with the authorisation of the citizen, it will be possible to eliminate requesting this information that the administrations already have.

- As far as possible, tend towards using common platforms and protocols that facilitate the previous points.

- Guarantee the security and privacy necessary in communications and transactions both between administrations and between these and the citizens.

- Deal with the legal work necessary to provide legal coverage to all the processes.

If it is possible to summarise the entirety of the changes necessary in an image so that the citizen viewpoint and of the Administration coincide, we could say that we have to move from a model like the current one (diagram 1) to a new model (diagram 2). From a situation where the citizens (or their agents) must go to different administrations/bodies, each one with their own special features, we move to a situation where the provision of services (jurisdiction of each one of the administrations) is carried out through a multi-channel integrated platform.

Current Model
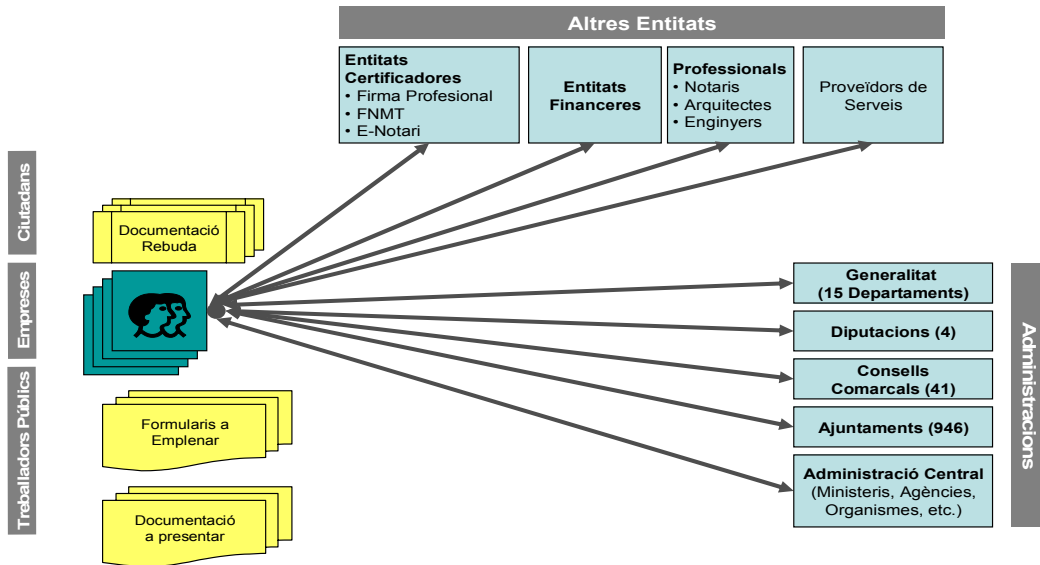
New Model
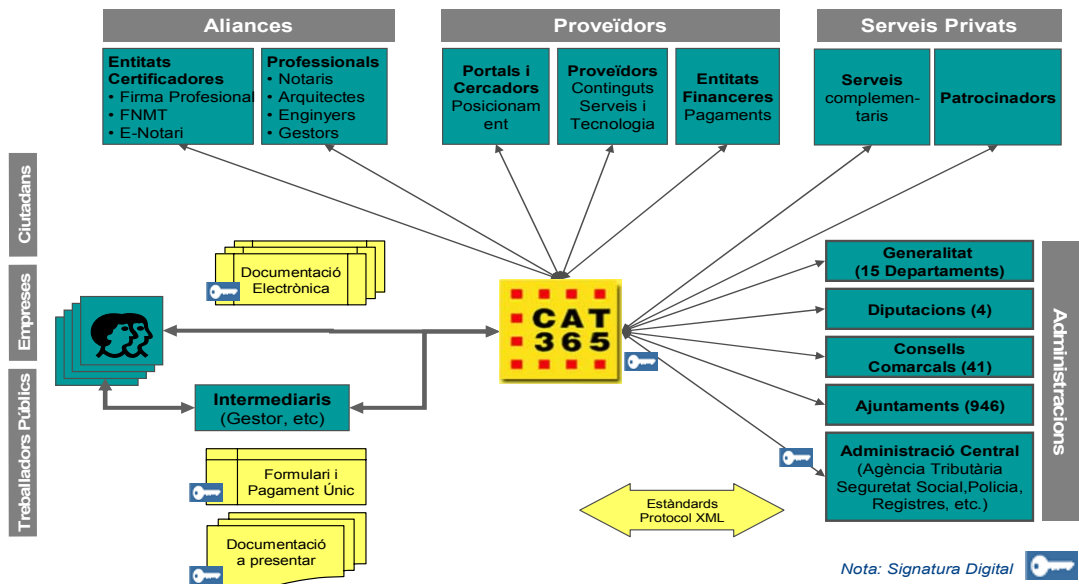
The Open Administration: reality and prospects

Since the signing of the parliamentary pact in July 2001 until the present (October 2003), all aspects of the same have been progressively unfolding:

- A Syndicate for the Open Electronic Administration has been created as a coordinating instrument to advance towards a new concept in the relation between citizens and administrations.

- Within this Syndicate, a Catalan Certification Agency has been created, as a certifying entity for all the Administrations in the syndicate (City Councils, "Comarca" Councils, County Councils and the Catalonia Autonomous Government). The mission of this agency is to establish the security mechanisms needed to guarantee privacy, confidentiality, integrity, identity and non-repudiation in data transmission communications that are established within the sphere of the public administrations in Catalonia and between these and the citizens that use public services.

- The Portal for Catalan Public Administrations (CAT365) has been started that, respecting the ownership of the jurisdictions of each administration, allows complete procedures to be carried out, that are administratively valid. To manage it, a company has been created, Electronic Public Services PLC, belonging to the Syndicate. At this time, the Catalonia Autonomous Government has already been incorporated onto this platform (in reality, to the technological platform that is one of the elements of the Portal), over one hundred procedures and a unified Data Transmission Registry has been created for these.

- Hundreds of points for public Internet access have been opened with the objective of passing the figure of 1 point for every 1500 inhabitants in the short term.

- An exhaustive training plan is being created for public employees through the School of Public Administration, in which both the Catalonia Autonomous Government and the local administrations are participating. At this point, more than 2300 public employees have attended these training courses.

- A continuous job has been initiated for designing and reviewing regulations to start covering all the technical and administrative implementations.

The Portal for Catalan Public Administrations (www.CAT365.net) was launched in July 2002 and since then, different services provided by different departments in the Catalonia Autonomous Government have been added. These services are presented to the citizen grouped into "vital facts" that intend to draw closer to the citizen viewpoint than the internal organisation of the Administration. Some examples of these vital facts are stated below:

- Having a child
- Accessing housing
- Looking for work
- Accessing education and training
- Health

To access the different services, three levels of identification and security have been established: Level 1, which can be accessed without identification (information and paying fines, as two examples), Level 2, which requires a user name and password (the majority of services), and Level 3, which demands an electronic signature (and at this point is only needed for some procedures related to companies or professional groups, like architects and doctors).

In the diagram below (diagram 3), we have schematically summarised the components of the Platform. One of the most significant elements, due to its impact for users, is the Contact Centre 24/7, which is technically integrated into the platform and offers permanent service for applications and procedures. On the road towards greater use of the possibilities offered by NICT (without neglecting the importance of the personal channel), being able to access - in a centralised and permanent manner – the Citizen/Administration relations through telephone agents has been proven to be a key element in implementing the new model.
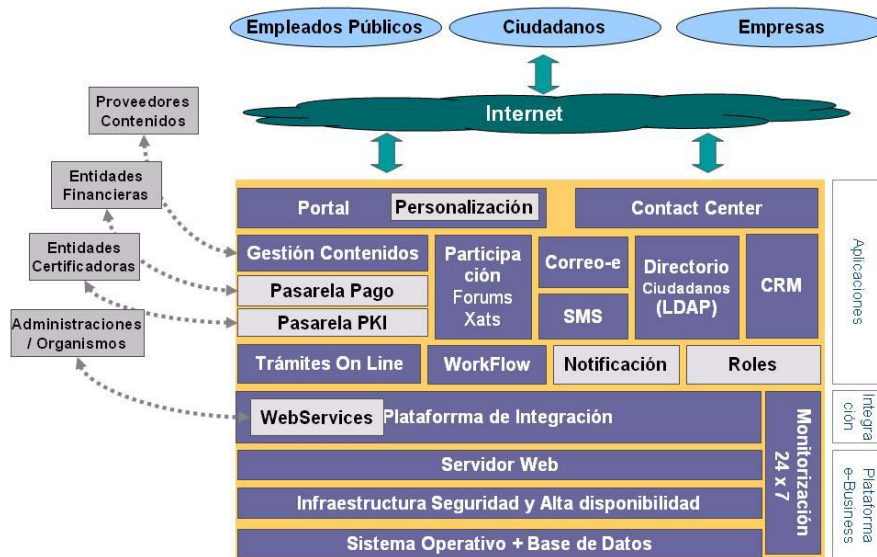
The developments have already been started for shortly incorporating those services of an inter-administrative nature. In particular, two projects are being worked on, that are going to be implemented very soon:

- Elimination of requesting citizens for Registration Certificates: there are many procedures with the Central Administration (for example,

National Identity Card, Passport, Traffic) and the Autonomous Administration (for example, school registration, Health Centres) that request citizens for the Registration Certificate. With the connection of the municipal registries to the CAT365 Platform and through the usage of this, this procedure (with the due authorisation of the citizen) can be avoided, which does not add any value to the request carried out to the corresponding Administration.

- Change of Address: every time a citizen moves to a new address, they must progressively communicate this fact to different administrations and/or private entities (such as basic services for light, water, telephone, etc.). This involves a series of small inconveniences and procedures that normally fall to the citizens themselves. Through agreements between CAT365 and the different administrations and entities, a service can be established through which the citizen will communicate their new address to CAT365 and CAT365, after verifying the data with the corresponding Register, will then communicate this information to all the involved bodies.

Together, the Open Administration of Catalonia (OAC), under the umbrella of a wide parliamentary and political consensus, intends to establish a new model of relationship between citizens and the Catalan Public Administrations.

CAT365, one year later

Amongst the different actions stemming from the Open Administration of Catalonia project, the creation of the CAT365 Portal has probably been the one that has had the greatest impact and visibility to Catalan citizens, companies and entities.

The model that the CAT365 is based on, stands out for the following reasons:

- The intermediation role of CAT365. Within the scope of providing public services, the different public administrations offer a set of services: CAT365 is in charge of distributing these to the end users.
- CAT365 distributes the services of the Catalan administrations by different channels: currently the distribution channels are 'classic' or personal, by telephone and by Internet. However, we are on the lookout for the development of our channels that can be used to offer a greater window of distribution possibilities such as Digital Land Television.
- One of the fundamental and differentiating aspects of CAT365 is that it is not a parallel administration: independently of the channel that is used to access CAT365 – public employees in person, the agent at the contact centre, or citizens themselves by Internet – all work on the same platform, with all the processes integrated into the CRM[1] of CAT365.

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[1] Customer Relationship Management

- The desire to be a multiple administrative initiative means that the contents and services of the different administrations are offered not based on each providing administration, given that citizens often do not understand – nor is it necessary that they know this – which concrete administration offers which service, but rather the offer continues to be added based on the different global needs within the scope of "vital facts". In the same way, CAT365 has content called "Do it on-line!" that contains information about more than 2000 on-line services – interactions and transactions – from the different administrations that act in Catalonia (local, autonomous and state).

- The desire for openness. Due to this, the navigation of CAT365 has been created in four languages (Catalan, Aranes, Spanish and English) and the interactions and transactions can be done in the two official languages of Catalonia: Catalan and Spanish. Equally, the desire for openness is reflected in the usage of the recommendations made by the Web Accessibility Initiative, obtaining the official level of AA. This means that CAT365 must be able to offer its content to the blind and different groups with difficulties so that they can comfortably navigate through the pages of CAT365.

- Personalisation. Traditionally, the different administrations have tended to provide homogeneous and generic information to the citizens. This in itself is not bad. But now, specific information is personalised and this personalisation provides added value to the service. For example, currently from CAT365, those who want to can have personalised information about the status of traffic, by subscribing to the service that allows CAT365 to send you an SMS message for a requested route if there are any incidents (accidents, construction work...) during a specified period of time. This service is extremely useful for everyone that has a routine time for their daily travels. A similar service is offered for the weather where a citizen can specify a region (municipality or "comarca") and request that CAT365 informs them when it is raining.

- Monitoring of the status of procedures. At any time of the day and any day of the week and through any of the CAT365 channels, the citizen can find out about the current status of the proceedings or applications that have been initiated with the administrations.

- Good management of incidences. One of the aspects that has been most highly desired, has been to define a model that allows the citizen to be able to request, suggest or complain to the Catalan administrations, or to CAT365 as an intermediary to these services, and that this incident is channelled efficiently and quickly to the person responsible for responding. Thus, each of the services distributed from CAT365 has a group of experts (called from the second level) that resolve, within a fixed period of time, those incidents that the agents at the contact centre or personal attention cannot resolve due to the specialised nature of the matter. CAT365 works so that the incidences are resolved within a fixed period of time and with a minimum quality level to ensure that the citizen who generated the incident is later satisfied.

CAT365 initiated, as we have mentioned, their activities in the beginning of July 2002. As of today, fifteen months later, the principal indicators of its activities are summarised below:

- Over 125 interactions and transactions offered.
- 275,000 procedures collected in the CAT365 CRM.
- Over 36,000 users registered with CAT365[2].
- Over 125,000 requests for information between administrations (which has allowed the personal presentation of certificates to be eliminated).
- Over 70,000 notices through SMS.

Where to go from here? The next steps

Althoug the changes effectuated so far are notable, it is clear that the objectives followed by the Open Administration of Catalonia are long term and that we are still at the beginning of their complete implementation.

In this sense, the Catalan public administrations and all agents participating in the OAC have suggested the need to meet the challenges that will provide a qualitative and quantitative leap to implementing the Catalonia e-Government. Some of these challenges are:

- To continue increasing the services offered, in two senses: on one hand, with the commitment of continuing to make more services available through the multiple channel offering, and on the other hand, with the commitment to continue prioritising those services with the greatest impact, either those that affect a large number of citizens or those that clearly improve their lives. Among those to be prioritised include pre-registration and registration for school, official certification of diplomas and studies, electronic medical records, electronic medical prescriptions, aid for rural development, virtual monitoring of the transport of dangerous materials, authorisation for business activities, etc.
- To continue working with the different administrations on those processes that affect more than one of them, and thus, present a greater complexity for citizens. The clearest example of these inter-administrative projects is the creation of companies, a project that the OAC must work on to integrate and simplify the current volume of procedures and applications for certificates.
- To increase accessibility to the Administration through distribution channels by promoting the personal service points, introducing mobile devises, wireless devises, etc.
- To choose more and better citizens, companies and entities. Ask for their opinions about which services and channels they prefer. Increase the opportunities to be able to give opinions and ask them if they were satisfied with the services provided, as is currently done at the Catalonia health services.

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[2] Only for some procedures is it necessary to be registered as a user of the Portal.

- To achieve the maximum simplification of procedures and the forms for requesting services. In this sense, our paradigm is the '0 certificates': that citizens do not have to demonstrate, certify or show any documents of their attributes if the administrations already have the material. To do this the interchange of information must be increased - already started this year - between the different administrations, always with the prior and express authorisation of the citizen.
- To continue with the program of managing the change towards a new model of administration. In this sense, the new services for the administration must use and keep in mind the current multiple channel system, the levels of simplification of the procedures and the documentation. Equally, the administration must reuse the different functional models offered by the technological platform in tracking information in order to not incur unnecessary costs.
- Strengthen public-private cooperation. The public sector does not normally meet all the needs arising from an act such as, for example, changing homes. In cases like this, the public and private spheres complement each other. The objective is that in the future, private companies can be added to the initiative for integrated services, in the service for requesting or cancelling services from companies that supply energy, water, and telephone service when a citizen changes addresses.

In summary, the Open Administration of Catalonia is a complex and strategic project whose end results will affect the entire society as well as the Administration itself. But we believe that the road we are travelling from a political point of view, as well as administratively and technically, establishes a well-defined direction in the social application of NICTs. Of course, on the road we will have to make changes and improvements, but we are convinced that the OAC will be one of the leading and main projects in the development of the Information Society in the immediate future.

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