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Progressing toward Teal Organizations: An Assessment of Organizational Innovation in the Spanish Public Administrations

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Abstract: Organizational innovation can be a promising path for public administrations to follow to become more supportive of the realization of sustainability goals. With the Teal Organizations framework as a reference, this study explores organizational innovation in Spanish public administrations by assessing the extent and patterns of the implementation of selected innovative organizational practices, with the aim to help them improve. This study performs multivariate and individual analyses of the variance and factor analysis of the responses given by Spanish public sector employees to an online questionnaire about the degree of implementation of certain practices in their organization. The results show that there are little differences in the degree of implementation of these practices among the national, regional, and local administrations and that this implementation does not seem to be guided by the three principles of Teal Organizations: self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose, but by five factors combining them, labeled as trust, task assignment, meetings management, hierarchy, and community and values. Because of the low degree of implementation of the practices under the community and values factor and the comparatively low effort required to introduce them, these practices appear as interesting options to explore when considering administrative reforms.

Keywords: organizational innovation; evolutionary organizations; Teal Organizations; public administration; public sector performance



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1. Introduction

The fields of sustainability and public administration are closely intertwined. On the one hand, the idea of sustainability fits well with other core values of public administration [1] and can guide decision making and action at all scales of governance and across policy sectors [2]. In the case of Spain, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), through the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Agenda 2030 [3] and the Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030 [4], act as a reference for all levels of government and are remarkably present in their activities [5].

On the other hand, public administrations are at the core of the system that promotes sustainable development [6] and play a key role in shaping sustainability transformations [7], making policies for sustainable development but also leading by example and developing capacities for managing these transformations [8], which has led to an increasing pressure for the public sector to assess its sustainability performance [9].

The key role of public administrations in the achievement of the 2030 sustainable Agenda, which is at the heart of the EU policies, is widely recognized in Europe, and the quality of public administration has become a crucial means to steer, guide, and stimulate the achievement of the SDG [10]. In the broadest sense, the quality of public administration and the improvement in public sector performance have been the subject of extensive administrative reforms adopted by nations around the world in recent decades, with different approaches and results [11–13].

When considering how public administration reforms can better support sustainable development efforts, research suggests that focus should be placed on the organizational perspective [14], including organizational competencies [7] and the organization's nature and purpose [15], as well as on structural measures [16] and the use of innovation as a sustainability tool [6].

Organizational innovation can therefore be understood as one of the levers for making public administrations more supportive of sustainability transformations, as well as constituting a key element of the public sector reform. In fact, some experiences, such as the shift of the Belgian Federal Public Service of Social Security to a new way of working based on a culture of staff empowerment and trust, the set-up of the EASME A.2 unit of the European Commission using the Teal Organizations framework as a reference, and the reform of the European Court of Auditors to become a task-based organization, suggest that, despite the difficulties in introducing changes in public administrations, organizational innovation is happening and can have positive impacts on their functioning [17].

Studying organizational innovation in the public sector poses specific challenges. Due to their nature, public administrations must operate at the same time in accordance with three different paradigms: (i) bureaucracies based on rationality and law enforcement; (ii) providers of public services with quality and efficiency; and (iii) promoters of networks for participation and collaboration between public and private actors, which adds complexity to the subject [18].

To face this complexity, the conceptual framework of Teal Organizations, developed by Laloux [19], appears to be especially interesting when reflecting on the reform of public administrations [20] and when analyzing organizational innovation occurring in them [17]. The Teal Organizations model is based on an evolutionary approach that considers new stages of organizational development as not created in opposition to earlier stages but building on, incorporating, and transcending them. This provides a wide analysis framework where diverse organizational models are included, facilitating the integration of the different paradigms of operation of public administrations into it. Additionally, research shows a high level of alignment between Teal Organizations and the achievement of sustainability goals [21,22].

Against this background, the present study explores organizational innovation in the context of Spanish public administrations, drawing on the model of Teal Organizations [19] as a conceptual framework. This context is largely determined by the highly decentralized territorial organization of Spain, which recognizes three levels of government: national (state), regional (autonomous communities), and local (provinces, municipalities, and other local entities such as islands or associations of municipalities). Governments at each level have autonomy to manage their own interests and therefore to configure their administrations, which leads to divergences among them. This study addresses this territorial dimension by analyzing the implementation of organizational innovation per type of territorial administration: national, regional, and local.

Moving toward more flexible organizational structures, closer to the Teal Organizations paradigm, has been suggested as one of the action lines for addressing the challenges the Spanish public administration is facing [23]. By identifying organizational elements in the Spanish public administrations where it is possible to act upon to progress toward Teal Organizations, this research aims to contribute to fostering organizational innovation as a potential lever for improving their performance, under the assumption that the challenges that public administrations are facing in the 21st century require contemporary organizational models.

To this end, this study investigates the degree and patterns of implementation among Spanish public administrations regarding some of the organizational practices that characterize Teal Organizations by analyzing the responses of public employees to an online questionnaire. As explained below, these practices are related to three major innovations: self-management (on the way the organization operates), wholeness (on how organization

members develop themselves and relate to each other), and evolutionary purpose (on how the direction of the organization is set and alignment is achieved).

In this investigation, this study seeks to answer two research questions:

1. Are there significant differences among the Spanish national, regional, and local administrations in the way Teal Organizational practices are implemented?
2. Does the implementation of these practices occur according to the patterns defined by the three Teal major innovations of self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose? If not, can other patterns be identified?

As a relatively new approach, there are very few references to the Teal Organizations framework in the literature [24], and papers are mostly focused on the private sector and qualitative research [22,25–28]. A few studies use a quantitative approach, analyzing Teal characteristics in micro, small, and medium enterprises across several industries [29,30] and companies operating in the energy sector [31]. This study, however, focuses on the public sector and uses a quantitative approach, which constitutes a novelty in the field. One of the main contributions of the present study is the development of an instrument for measuring the degree of implementation of the organizational practices that characterize Teal Organizations, which could be further used in other contexts to continue providing insights on organizational innovation. More generally, this study also aims to contribute to the study of innovation in the public sector, where comprehensive efforts to examine innovation in the public sector are still scarce [32,33], and quantitative studies are even less common [34].

Organizational innovation can be defined as the introduction of something new to an organization [35]. This something new can be a product or a process, but also an organizational method [36] or more broadly, an idea, an action, or a behavior [37,38]. It implies an intentional and planned change of the organization, with the goal of carrying it to an improved state [39]; the planned change must, therefore, create value for the organization [40].

Although, as explained above, organizational innovation can be understood in a very broad sense and relate to many different types of innovations. The focus of this study will be on what is usually known as ‘managerial innovation’—that is, new approaches to formulate strategy; structure tasks; define management processes, systems, and practices; align members with the organization’s purpose; and enable organizational adaptation and change [41,42], as those are precisely the kind of innovations that characterize Teal Organizations.

This approach is aligned with the ‘management innovation’ type of public service innovation proposed by Chen, Walker, and Sawhney [43]. In their typology for understanding public service innovation, the authors classify innovation by its focus (strategy, capacity, and operations) and its locus (internal or external), leading to six types of innovation: mission, policy, management, partner, service, and citizen. In this framework, ‘management innovation’ corresponds to innovations focused on operations with an internal locus.

2. Teal Organizations

According to Laloux [19], ‘Evolutionary—Teal Organizations’ represent the latest step in organizational development. Building on evolutionary concepts from other disciplines, he created an interpretative framework for understanding how organizational innovation is implemented [44]. From the point of view of the two dominant approaches to organizational change, ‘Planned change’ and ‘Emergent change’ [45,46], Laloux’s framework would fall within the latter, given its focus on self-organization, change opportunities in everyday work, and continuous adaptation to ensure alignment with the environment.

The framework is based on organizational paradigms that have developed in several stages, which he describes using colors, as shown in Table 1. These stages have been inspired by the levels in the Spiral Dynamics model introduced by Graves [47] and further developed by Beck and Cowan [48], but mainly on the adaptation made by Wilber to create his Integral Theory [49–51]. It also has some resemblances with the model of organizational

development proposed by Harung, Heaton, and Alexander [52], which distinguishes four stages of evolution: task-based management, process-based management, values-based management, and natural law-based management.

Table 1. Organizational paradigms according to Laloux.

Paradigm	Examples	Key Breakthroughs	Guiding Metaphor
Impulsive—Red	Mafia, street gangs, tribal militias	Division of labor, command authority	Wolf pack
Conformist—Amber	Catholic church, military, government agencies, public school systems	Formal roles, processes	Army
Achievement—Orange	Multinational companies, charter schools	Innovation, accountability, meritocracy	Machine
Pluralistic—Green	Culture-driven organizations	Empowerment, values-driven culture, stakeholder model	Family
Evolutionary—Teal	Pioneer organizations such as Patagonia, Buurtzorg, and FAVI	Self-management, wholeness, evolutionary purpose	Living organism

For Laloux, ‘evolutionary organizations’, whose color is teal and whose guiding metaphor is the living system, transcend ‘Pluralistic—Green organizations’ and represent the next step in organizational development. They act as living beings, adapting to their environment thanks to the capacity of their members for self-organizing and self-managing to accomplish their goals. Within the Teal paradigm, traditional planning and control structures are replaced by small groups of workers who take over management functions and can adopt different roles according to the organization’s needs. Hence, coordination is achieved not through the traditional hierarchy but through regular communication with colleagues, frequent knowledge exchange, and engagement of employees with the purpose and values. Decisions are made through consultation processes with the participation of those involved, and the human dimension becomes a central element in the way the organization operates.

These features lead to a distinctive organizational culture, which can be connected to other organizational models or approaches where the human dimension plays a key role, such as servant leadership [53] or the liberated firm [54]. At the same time, the complexity, participation, interconnection, and interdependence that characterize Teal Organizations create an environment that fosters innovation. Differently from ‘Achievement—Orange organizations’, Teal innovation does not happen centrally, according to a plan; it can appear at any place in the organization whenever someone experiments to find an appropriate response to the changing environment [19].

Teal Organizations are based on three key organizational breakthroughs, which can be seen as the ‘Teal principles’:

- Self-management is described by Laloux [19] as ‘the key to operate effectively, even at a large scale, with a system based on peer relationships, without the need for either hierarchy or consensus’.
- Wholeness is described by Laloux [19] as ‘a consistent set of practices that invite us to reclaim our inner wholeness and bring all of who we are to work’.
- Evolutionary purpose is described by Laloux [19] in the following terms: ‘Teal Organizations are seen as having a life and a sense of direction of their own. Instead of trying to predict and control the future, members of the organization are invited to listen in and understand what the organization wants to become, what purpose it wants to serve’.

Due to their evolution-related aspects, Teal Organizations can be connected to the ‘complex evolving systems’ (CES) approach of Mitleton-Kelly [55] and the three Teal principles to the ten principles that, according to that author, characterize CES [17]:

- Self-management to CES principles: (1) interconnectivity, (2) interdependence, (5) self-organization, (9) far-from-equilibrium state, and (10) creation of a new order.
- Wholeness to CES principles: (6) exploration of the space of possibilities and (7) co-evolution.
- Evolutionary purpose to CES principles: (3) feedback, (4) emergence, and (8) history and path dependence.

It is worth noting that, although self-management may be considered the most prominent trait of Teal Organizations, due to the growing interest in less-hierarchical organizational approaches and radical and organization-wide decentralization experiences [56], Laloux concedes equal importance to the wholeness and evolutionary purpose aspects, which are constantly expressed in the way Teal Organizations behave. Apart from the cases described by Laloux exemplifying the application of these two principles [19], some experiences of organizational innovation in recent years seem to suggest that the focus on personal development and relationships that lies at the core of the wholeness principle and on setting adaptative strategies while fostering commitment that characterizes the evolutionary purpose principle is a trait present and consciously sought when engaging in organizational transformation [17,44].

According to Laloux [19], each of these breakthroughs or principles is expressed through several concrete, day-to-day practices that deviate from traditionally accepted management methods, thus becoming manifestations of organizational innovation in the sense explained above.

The application of the three Teal breakthroughs and the systems thinking-based, planet-centric worldview associated with them seems to place Teal Organizations in a good position for fully integrating sustainability into their day-to-day practices [21]. In particular, the evolutionary purpose principle seems to implicitly assume that Teal Organizations must be sustainable [22]. In fact, the environmental dimension of Teal Organizations has been highlighted by Laloux, who considers that Teal Organizations have a different approach to dealing with their environmental and social impact, based on a sense of inner rightness as the main motivation for environmental and social initiatives, and on the triggering of these initiatives by passionate people joining forces from any place in the organization [19]. The insistence of the Teal Organizational paradigm on addressing the barriers to change, its potential for the co-creation of a sustainability vision and strategy, and its freedom to prototype solutions to adapt quickly to risks and opportunities can bring additional benefits to organizations looking for further adoption of sustainable development goals [21].

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Methods and Data Collection

As stated above, the motivation of the present study was the identification of organizational elements in Spanish public administrations that could be employed as potential levers for improving their performance through organizational innovation. Since the Teal Organizations framework was used as the reference for the analysis, the methods chosen for the research sought to find those elements by examining the implementation of practices characteristic of Teal Organizations.

The authors adopted a cross-sectional design for the study. Data on the implementation of Teal Organization practices were obtained from a non-probability sampling survey, combining convenience and snowball approaches [57], conducted among Spanish public sector employees by using the online survey tool Typeform. The online survey was published and open for receiving responses from 20 February to 25 June 2022 and was made known to potential respondents through the social networks Twitter and LinkedIn, as the use of social media platforms broadens the reach of researchers to a larger target population and is gradually becoming a familiar tool in academic research [58]. The statistical analysis of the data was performed using R, the free software environment for statistical computing and graphics (version 4.3.1). This statistical analysis included, as described

below, normality and homogeneity of variance tests, multivariate and individual analysis of variance, and factor analysis.

To ensure an adequate representation of the target population (i.e., employees in the Spanish public administration), several screening questions were presented at the beginning of the survey, asking the respondents to provide information about the territorial level of government they work for (national, regional, or local) and some features of their job, like the policy area, managerial responsibilities, or administrative category. The respondents were also asked to provide some demographic data, such as their age, gender, and education. A total of 221 responses were received, out of which 194 responses were retained after deleting 27 cases with missing values in the variables under the scope of the analysis.

Among the respondents, 99 (51%) reported working for the national administration, 23 (11.9%) for the regional administration, and 72 (37.1%) for the local administration. A total of 88 (45.4%) were male and 105 (54.1%) were female employees. In terms of age, 2.1% were from the below-30 age group, 12.6% were from the 30 to 39 age group, 28.9% were from the 40 to 49 age group, 42.6% were from the 50 to 59 age group, and 13.7% were from the over-59 age group. A total of 45% of respondents had 0–10 years of experience, 20.9% had 11–20, 14.7% had 21–30, 16.2% had 31–40, and 3.1% had more than 40 years of experience. In terms of the education attained, 16.5% had non-university studies, 47.9% had a bachelor's degree, and 35.6% had a post-graduate degree. In terms of people management responsibilities, 40.7% reported no people management responsibilities, 42.3% reported people management responsibilities under the Head of Unit level, and 17.1% declared themselves as Head of Unit or belonging to the senior management level. Table 2 presents the demographic details of the respondents, compared to the demographic details of the whole population of public employees in Spain, where available, according to the data of the Statistical Bulletin of Personnel serving Public Administrations of July 2022 [59]. As can be seen, the sample matches reasonably well the population with regard to gender and most of the group ages, but it does not fit well the actual distribution of public employees among levels of administration, as the national administration is highly over-represented in the sample.

Table 2. Sample description and comparison with Spanish public employees' data.

Parameter	Description	% Sample (n = 194)	% Public Employees in Spain
Level of administration	National administration	51%	18.9%
	Regional administration	11.9%	59.2%
	Local administration	37.1%	21.9%
Gender	Male	45.4%	42.2%
	Female	54.1%	57.8%
	Other	0.5%	
Age group *	Below 30	2.1%	3.7%
	30–39	12.6%	11.0%
	40–49	28.9%	21.8%
	50–59	42.6%	41.6%
	Over 59	13.7%	21.9%
Years of experience	0–10	45%	
	11–20	20.9%	
	21–30	14.7%	
	31–40	16.2%	
	Over 40	3.1%	
Education	Non-university	16.5%	
	Bachelor's degree	47.9%	
	Post-graduate degree	35.6%	
People management responsibilities	No people management responsibilities	40.7%	
	Managers below Head of Unit level	42.3%	
	Head of Unit or above	17.1%	

* Age group data were only available for the Spanish National Administration.

3.2. Measures

Due to the novelty of the subject and hence the lack of existence of established and validated measure instruments, the present study developed its own instrument for measuring the degree of implementation of the innovative organizational practices that characterize Teal Organizations.

The instrument consisted of 23 items included in the survey, each of them describing an organizational practice. These organizational practices were selected among the practices described by Laloux as characteristic of Teal Organizations based on their relevance and applicability to public administrations after being contrasted with the results of the analysis of four cases of organizational innovation in public administrations performed in a former study [17]. The practices were then assigned to each of the three Teal principles: self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose, following the allocation made by Laloux in the explanation of those three principles [19].

It must be noted, however, that the presence of items related to the principle of evolutionary purpose is quite low. Because most of the practices allocated to this principle are connected to market-oriented organizations, their applicability to the public administration context is very limited. Moreover, the rigidity of the legal framework that rules Spanish public administrations, characteristic of the Napoleonic administrative tradition to which Spain belongs [60], imposes additional constraints that prevent many of these practices from being actually implemented. The culture of prescriptive legality prevailing in Spain, where the laws determine or program detailed administrative action, hampers adaptation, as changes require, in most cases, legislative modifications [61]. The application of the evolutionary purpose principle requires results orientation and efficiency-seeking; this focus on the legalistic aspects rather than managerial considerations makes it difficult to achieve those goals [61,62].

For every item, respondents were asked to measure the degree of implementation in their organizations of the described practice by providing a rating on a five-point interval scale, ranging from 1 (a very low or non-existent implementation of the practice) to 5 (a very high implementation of the practice), with values closer to 5 meaning more progress toward the way of functioning of Teal Organizations. To help respondents with their replies, a tailored description of the lowest and highest points of the scale was provided for each item to adjust them to the particularities of the practice in question.

To make it easier for the respondents to answer the questions in the survey, the 23 items were grouped in 4 categories: (i) structure, distribution of work, and coordination; (ii) human resources practices; (iii) participation and openness; (iv) purpose and community.

The grouping of items, together with the associated Teal principles for each item, are presented in Table 3, whereas Appendix A shows the translated version of the original question in Spanish linked to each of the items, as well as the description of points 1 and 5 of the interval scale for that item.

Table 3. Measured items, grouping in categories, and association with Teal principles.

Category	#	Item	Associated Teal Principles
Structure, distribution of work and coordination	1	Hierarchical or flat structure	Self-management
	2	Centralized decision making	Self-management
	3	Internal coordination meetings	Self-management
	4	Meeting optimization	Wholeness
	5	Fixed job description	Self-management, wholeness
	6	Role adjustment	Self-management
	7	Workplace flexibility	Wholeness
	8	Working hours flexibility	Wholeness
Human resources practices	9	Future job fit assessment	Wholeness, evolutionary purpose
	10	Culture knowledge	Wholeness
	11	Training responsibility	Wholeness

Table 3. Cont.

Category	#	Item	Associated Teal Principles
Participation and openness	12	Information-sharing	Self-management
	13	Inclusive decision making	Self-management
	14	Meeting participant listening	Wholeness
	15	Conflict-dealing	Self-management, wholeness
	16	Failure-dealing	Wholeness
	17	Debates about values	Wholeness
Purpose and community	18	Sense of community development	Wholeness
	19	Values in daily practice	Wholeness
	20	Purpose and goals alignment	Evolutionary purpose
	21	Celebrations	Wholeness
	22	Working environment personalization	Wholeness
	23	Working environment as status symbol	Wholeness

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) per type of administration are presented in Table 4. This table also presents the results of the analysis of the assumptions of normality within groups, performed by examining the using the skewness and kurtosis coefficients, and the homogeneity of variance, performed using Levene's test [63,64].

Table 4. Descriptive statistics per type of administration.

Item	Global Mean (n = 194)	Mean National (n = 99)	Mean Regional (n = 23)	Mean Local (n = 72)	Global SD (n = 194)	SD National (n = 99)	SD Regional (n = 23)	SD Local (n = 72)
1	2.21	2.04	2.48	2.35	1.25	1.18	1.31	1.32
2	2.28	2.16	2.61	2.33	1.18	1.16	1.16	1.21
3	3.15	3.02	3.04	3.36	1.26	1.24	1.11	1.31
4	1.96	1.87	2.17	2.01	1.11	1.07	1.23	1.14
5	2.78	2.71	2.52	2.96	1.33	1.33	1.16	1.38
6	2.35	2.43	2.00	2.33	1.13	1.13	1.09	1.15
7	2.52	2.48	3.00	2.40	1.17	1.13	1.31	1.16
8	2.5	2.43	2.65	2.54	1.17	1.03	1.34	1.30
9 ***	1.88	2.13	1.26 (*)	1.72	1.18	1.27	0.62	1.08
10 ·	1.92	2.12	1.61	1.74 (*)	1.13	1.21	0.84	1.05
11	3.17	3.04	3.43	3.26	1.3	1.34	1.12	1.29
12	2.71	2.57	2.83	2.88	1.27	1.28	1.11	1.29
13	2.7	2.55	2.61	2.94	1.13	1.15	0.99	1.12
14	2.4	2.22	2.74	2.53	1.15	1.10	1.14	1.20
15 ·	2.45	2.41	2.17	2.60	1.2	1.12	1.03	1.35
16	2.23	2.12	2.30	2.36	1.17	1.04	1.22	1.31
17	1.88	1.74	2.17	1.97	1.02	0.89	1.19	1.10
18	1.68	1.71 (*)	1.78	1.61 (*)	1.03	1.01	1.00	1.07
19	2.34	2.43	2.52	2.14	1.14	1.09	1.12	1.19
20	2.07	2.03	2.26	2.06	1.06	1.07	0.92	1.10
21	1.97	2.19	1.78	1.72 (*)	1.2	1.24	1.13	1.12
22	2.79	2.78	2.91	2.78	1.18	1.17	1.16	1.21
23	2.26	2.06	2.13	2.57	1.43	1.41	1.29	1.48

Statistics for the whole sample have been highlighted in bold. *** Levene's test of homogeneity of variance significant at 0.001. · Levene's test of homogeneity of variance significant at 0.1. (*) Normality questionable because of high skewness and kurtosis.

4.2. Analysis per Type of Administration

As shown in the descriptive statistics, the assumptions of normality within groups and homogeneity of variance are only questionable for a small number of items, so it has been deemed reasonable to accept that the sample data meet the conditions for performing an analysis of variance to determine if there are significant differences among the Spanish

national, regional, and local administrations in the way Teal Organizational practices are implemented, thus responding to the first research question.

To that end, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was initially performed. The results of this analysis using Pillai's trace [65,66] show that there was a significant effect of the type of administration on the degree of implementation of organizational practices characteristics of Teal Organizations, $V = 0.44$, $F(46, 340) = 2.07$, $p < 0.001$.

To determine where this difference lies, an individual analysis of variance (ANOVA) was completed for each of the 23 items, complemented by a post hoc analysis using robust tests to compensate for the potentially unfitting assumptions on the data distributions. For these robust tests, the R function *mcppb20()*, which uses a percentile bootstrap to compute *p*-values as well as trimming the group means, was used [64,67]. Table 5 shows the result of this ANOVA analysis, where, for the purposes of the discussion below, only significance values of 0.05 and below have been considered.

Table 5. ANOVA.

Item	F Value	Pr (>F)	ANOVA Significance	Between-Groups Differences after Robust Tests
1	1.88	0.16		
2	1.47	0.23		Regional vs. local (.)
3	1.64	0.20		National vs. regional (*)
4	0.84	0.43		
5	1.23	0.30		
6	1.38	0.25		Regional vs. local (.)
7	2.37	0.10	.	National vs. local (*)
8	0.39	0.68		
9	6.44	0.00	**	National vs. regional (*) National vs. local (*) Regional vs. local (**)
10	3.48	0.03	*	National vs. regional (*)
11	1.16	0.32		
12	1.35	0.26		
13	2.73	0.07	.	National vs. regional (.)
14	2.66	0.07	.	National vs. regional (.) Regional vs. local (*)
15	1.19	0.31		
16	0.92	0.40		
17	2.26	0.11		Regional vs. local (.)
18	0.31	0.74		
19	1.78	0.17		National vs. local (.) National vs. regional (*)
20	0.44	0.64		
21	3.60	0.03	*	National vs. regional (**)
22	0.13	0.88		
23	2.78	0.06	.	National vs. regional (*)

Significance codes: '***' = 0.01, '**' = 0.05, '.' = 0.1.

4.3. Factor Analysis

The items of the questionnaire were subject to principal component and factor analysis, with the purpose of examining the existence of underlying elements that might explain the degree of implementation of the organizational practices characterizing Teal Organizations and the potential relationship between those elements and the three differentiating principles of Teal Organizations.

To assess the adequacy of the sample for this analysis, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin statistic was checked, providing an acceptable result of 0.86 [64,66,68,69]. This was complemented by performing Bartlett's test of sphericity, which was significant, therefore ensuring appropriate correlations between variables [64,66,69,70].

4.3.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Firstly, and in order to respond to the second research question, a factor model based on the three Teal principles was created and tested through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). In this model, the existence of 3 factors, 1 for each of the 3 Teal principles, was assumed, with the 23 survey items being associated with 1 or more of the 3 factors according to Table 3. The purpose of this test was to check whether the implementation of Teal practices occurs according to the patterns defined by the Teal principles—that is, whether practices associated with the same Teal principle are correlated in their implementation.

The fitness of the model was assessed by comparing the ratio of chi-square to the degrees of freedom (CMIN/DF), the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the root mean residuals (RMR) with the values recommended in the literature [71]. The results, which revealed a poor fit of the model, are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Results of the confirmatory factor analysis.

Index	CMIN/DF	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	RMR
Model value	2.54	0.791	0.766	0.736	0.089	0.114
Recommended value	<3.0	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	<0.08	<0.1

4.3.2. Principal Component Analysis

Because of the poor fit of the model based on the 3 Teal principles, a principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted on the 23 items with orthogonal rotation (varimax), with the goal of identifying other potential factors, different from the 3 Teal principles, that could explain the variance observed in the survey data and therefore suggest some patterns of implementation of Teal practices in Spanish public administrations.

Although six components had eigenvalues over Kaiser’s criterion of 1 [72], parallel analysis [73] suggested the number of factors to be five. After examining both options, five components were finally selected, as it was considered that their combination provided a sufficient explanation of the variance (56.71%) and a representative and parsimonious set of factors that facilitate interpretation.

Table 7 shows the results of the PCA, with the factor loadings after rotation and the clustering of items, where the five components have been labeled as (1) community and values, (2) trust, (3) hierarchy, (4) tasks assignment, and (5) meetings management. The table also displays the Cronbach’s alpha value of each component as an assessment of the strength of the factor.

Table 7. Results of the principal component analysis.

#	Item	Factor Loadings after Varimax Orthogonal Rotation				
		Community and Values	Trust	Hierarchy	Tasks Assignment	Meetings Management
18	Sense of community development	0.75	−0.01	0.13	0.17	−0.02
21	Celebrations	0.73	0.00	−0.08	0.13	−0.04
19	Values in daily practice	0.72	0.16	0.10	0.00	0.09
20	Purpose and goals alignment	0.67	0.13	0.10	0.00	0.26
17	Debates about values	0.62	0.27	0.29	−0.01	0.32
16	Failure-dealing	0.57	0.47	0.29	0.02	0.14
9	Future job fit assessment	0.48	0.19	−0.11	0.45	−0.17
22	Working environment personalization	0.45	0.42	0.25	−0.04	−0.25
10	Culture knowledge	0.44	0.23	0.11	0.37	0.01
8	Working hours flexibility	0.03	0.75	−0.11	0.19	0.12
13	Inclusive decision making	0.32	0.69	0.33	0.07	0.12
11	Training responsibility	0.10	0.63	0.14	0.04	−0.25

Table 7. Cont.

#	Item	Factor Loadings after Varimax Orthogonal Rotation				
		Community and Values	Trust	Hierarchy	Tasks Assignment	Meetings Management
12	Information-sharing	0.23	0.59	0.48	0.04	0.06
7	Workplace flexibility	−0.01	0.55	−0.24	0.39	0.22
15	Conflict-dealing	0.49	0.53	0.31	0.03	0.03
1	Hierarchical or flat structure	0.08	0.06	0.73	0.13	0.06
23	Working environment as status symbol	0.16	0.02	0.63	0.01	−0.01
2	Centralized decision making	0.01	0.22	0.61	0.35	−0.01
5	Fixed job description	−0.01	0.02	0.23	0.72	−0.03
6	Role adjustment	0.23	0.24	0.12	0.68	0.15
4	Meeting optimization	0.19	−0.08	0.16	0.31	0.70
3	Internal coordination meetings	−0.01	−0.09	0.16	0.38	−0.60
14	Meeting participants listening	0.40	0.39	0.27	0.13	0.41
	Eigenvalues	4.07	3.24	2.30	1.95	1.48
	% of variance	17.69	14.1	10.00	8.49	6.43
	α	0.84	0.79	0.61	0.62	0.42

The loadings for the items corresponding to each of the factors have been highlighted in bold.

5. Discussion

5.1. Degree of Implementation of Teal Organization Practices

The analysis of the responses to the online questionnaire shows, overall, a low degree of implementation of the organizational practices characteristic of Teal Organizations among Spanish public administrations, with very few significant differences per type of administration.

Only 2 of the 23 items scored a mean value above 3 on the 1 to 5 scale, namely, the training responsibility item, with a global mean of 3.17, and the internal coordination meetings item, with a global mean of 3.15. These two items represent, therefore, the practices where progress toward Teal Organizations practices is greater. Of them, only the differences in the score of the internal coordination meetings between national and regional administrations are statistically significant, though this difference is very small (3.02 vs. 3.04). These results suggest that in Spanish public administrations, the responsibility for training is shared equally between the employees and the organization (which is consistent with a common practice of allowing employees to enroll in courses from a corporate catalogue), and that internal coordination is achieved through a balanced combination of periodical and ad hoc meetings. In this sense, the way Spanish public administrations deal with training and coordination meetings seem to be closer to Orange or Green Organizations than to the Amber Organizations that they supposedly exemplify.

A second set of items, representing relevant progress toward Teal practices, is composed of the seven items showing mean values below 3 and equal to or higher than 2.5. Among them, the highest values of this range correspond to these four items: working environment personalization (global mean of 2.79), fixed job description (global mean of 2.78), information-sharing (global mean of 2.71), and inclusive decision making (global mean of 2.7), with no statistically significant differences among types of administration. The lowest values of this range correspond to workplace flexibility (global mean of 2.52), working hours flexibility (global mean of 2.5), and culture knowledge (global mean of 2.5), with the only significant difference in the degree of implementation of the workplace flexibility between national (2.48) and local (2.4) administrations.

The results above suggest that employees of Spanish public administrations have some freedom to personalize their working environment, possibly due to the lack of regulations prescribing that subject and some flexibility in the definition of their job responsibilities, which could be explained by the difficulties in maintaining updated job descriptions. The relatively high scores of information sharing and inclusive decision making point

to a working environment where employees receive relevant information, although not consistently and about all subjects, and are involved in some of the decisions; this might be linked to the obligations to inform and consult employees set in the Spanish administrative and labor laws, but also to middle management that is slowly moving toward more participative management habits. The progress of Teal practices relating working hours and workplace flexibility can be explained by the organizational changes introduced because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which introduced a widespread implementation of teleworking, some of which still remains; this also explains the difference between national and local administrations, since local administrations, which provide services more directly related to citizens, have more difficulties in designing jobs suitable for flexible working arrangements. As for the culture knowledge item, an explanation for their relatively high score can be the fact that, in some selection processes, successful candidates can choose among a set of open positions and usually meet the organizations offering those jobs to know more about them before deciding.

A third set of items is the one composed of the nine items with mean values below 2.5 and above 2, where some progress toward Teal practices, though insufficient to reap the benefits they can provide, can be observed. Of them, four items show values higher than 2.3: conflict-dealing (global mean of 2.45); meeting participant listening (global mean of 2.4), with a statistically significant difference between regional and local administrations (2.74 vs. 2.53); role adjustment (global mean of 2.35); and values in daily practice (global mean of 2.34), with a statistically significant difference between national and regional administrations (2.43 vs. 2.52). The five items with the lowest values in this range are centralized decision making (global mean of 2.28); working environment as a status symbol (global mean of 2.26), with a statistically significant difference between national and regional administrations (2.06 vs. 2.13); failure-dealing (global mean of 2.23); hierarchical or flat structure (global mean of 2.21); and purpose and goal alignment (global mean of 2.07).

The last set of items, corresponding to those practices farthest away from the way of working in Teal Organizations and therefore also showing insufficient progress, is composed of five items: celebrations (global mean of 1.97), with a significant difference between national and regional administrations (2.19 vs. 1.78); meeting optimization (global mean of 1.96); debates about values (global mean of 1.88); future job fit assessment (global mean of 1.88), with significant differences among national (2.13), regional (1.26), and local (1.72) administrations; and sense of community development (global mean of 1.68).

These results suggest that Spanish public administrations are still hierarchical organizations, where most decisions are made in a centralized manner and positions higher in the hierarchy enjoy better working environments (as the working environment as a status symbol item shows), although this practice seems to be more frequent in the national administration compared to regional administrations, perhaps because of its longer existence. This is not surprising as hierarchy is embedded in the traditional way of working of bureaucracies. Values are somehow applied in daily practice, apparently to a higher degree in regional administrations than in the national administration, although there is little debate about them, which raises doubts about the effectiveness of their application. There is a slight openness to ensure that the voices of all participants in meetings are heard, more in regional than in local administration, but, as the meeting optimization item shows, there is a clear lack of structured practices to optimize those meetings in terms of results and resources spent in them.

The results also suggest that practices for dealing with conflict and failure are rare, which is consistent with the traditional attitude of bureaucracies of ignoring them (they are simply subjects no one speaks about), and that there are few possibilities for adjusting responsibilities in the job only with the agreement of the teammates, something that is in line with the rigidity of hierarchical organizations. Practices that focus on the social and individual dimensions of the employees seem to be almost inexistent, which suggests that emotions, social needs, and personal interests are not usually considered, as is customary in bureaucracies (workers are just 'cogs in the machine'). There are few celebrations, though it

seems that they are more frequent in the national than in regional administrations (maybe because these celebrations are usually connected to the achievement of political goals), and almost no practices to develop a sense of community. Similarly, the alignment of employees with the culture, goals, and purpose of the organization is not considered, neither during their recruitment nor after they have joined, although national administration seems to place comparatively greater emphasis on candidates' alignment during recruitment, followed by local administrations.

5.2. Patterns of Implementation of Teal Organizations Practices

Overall, the results thus suggest that little progress has been made so far toward Teal Organization practices, and the analysis of the responses to the online questionnaire using CFA shows that the implementation of these practices does not seem to follow the three Teal principles introduced by Laloux. This indicates that, although the three Teal principles may be useful to characterize the final stage of Teal Organizations, their usefulness as a reference during the transition can be questioned.

Instead of the three Teal principles, the PCA analysis of the responses to the questionnaire suggests that, in the case of Spanish public administrations, progress toward Teal Organization practices is better explained by considering five implementation dimensions, as shown in Table 7. The features of these five implementation dimensions, including their relationships with the three Teal principles, are summarized in Table 8, where the dimensions have been ranked by their average score.

Table 8. Summary of the five implementation dimensions.

Implementation Dimension	Average Score	Number of Items	α	Related Teal Principles
Trust	2.68	6	0.79	Self-Management (3 items) Wholeness (4 items)
Task assignment	2.57	2	0.62	Self-Management (2 items) Wholeness (1 item)
Meetings management	2.5	3	0.42	Self-Management (1 item) Wholeness (2 items)
Hierarchy	2.25	3	0.61	Self-Management (2 items) Wholeness (1 item)
Community and Values	2.15	9	0.84	Evolutionary purpose (2 items) Wholeness (8 items)

The first dimension has been labeled community and values since it is mainly related to practices about values, community development, and alignment. It shows high internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.84$) and includes 9 items, 2 items associated with the evolutionary purpose principle, and 8 of the 15 items associated with the wholeness principle (1 of the 9 items is associated with both). It is also the dimension where progress toward Teal Organization practices is lowest, with an average score, considering the global means of its 9 items, of 2.15.

The second dimension has been labeled trust since it is related to practices that rely on a significant degree of trust in the employees for their implementation, such as information sharing, inclusive decision making, and working hours and workplace flexibility. It also shows high internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.79$) and includes six items, three associated with the self-management principle and four associated with the wholeness principle (again, one of the items is associated with both). This is the dimension where progress toward Teal Organization practices is highest, with an average score of 2.68.

The third dimension, labeled hierarchy, shows moderate internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.61$) and includes three items, two associated with the self-management principle (hierarchical or flat structure and centralized decision making) and one with the wholeness principle

(working environment as a status symbol). With an average score of 2.25, this dimension shows the second-lowest progress toward Teal Organization practices.

The fourth dimension has been labeled task assignment, as it includes two items, a fixed job description (associated with the self-management and wholeness principles) and role adjustment (associated with the self-management principle), related to the way tasks and responsibilities are allocated. It also shows moderate internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.62$), and its average score of 2.57 is the second-highest.

The fifth dimension, the only one with low internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.42$), includes three items related to the way meetings are managed, so it has been labeled meetings management. Two of these three items are associated with the wholeness principle (meeting optimization and meeting participant listening), and one with the self-management principle (internal coordination meetings). With an average score of 2.5, it occupies the middle position in the ranking of dimensions based on their progress toward Teal Organization practices. One interesting trait of this dimension is that the factor loading of the internal coordination meetings item has the opposite sign to that of the other two. This suggests that the movement toward more ad hoc meetings instead of scheduled ones is accompanied by the loss of practices to optimize meetings and to ensure that all participants are listened to.

6. Conclusions

This research has tried to assess organizational innovation in Spanish public administrations, and more specifically, managerial innovation, using the Teal Organizations framework as a reference. Managerial innovation becomes particularly relevant for the public sector as systematic reviews of studies on public service innovation suggest that this is the most common type of innovation among the analyzed cases [34,43].

Apart from the intrinsic limitations of using a novel instrument developed as part of the research, due to the absence of established and validated measure instruments on the subject, one of the main shortcomings of the research is its representativeness. The lack of randomness, as convenience and snowball sampling methods were used, and the fact that the regional administration is significantly under-represented in the sample pose challenges to the generalization of the results to the entire population of public employees in Spain. Additionally, the choice of an online questionnaire as a measuring instrument leads to the problems faced by surveys using this method, like potential misunderstandings and misinterpretations, as unclear questions or instructions cannot be explained.

Despite the limitations explained above, the results have shown that the organizational practices that characterize Teal Organizations are far from being implemented in the Spanish public administrations. This is not surprising as governments, according to the Teal Organizations framework, exemplify the Conformist—Ambar paradigm and therefore are placed at the initial stages of organizational development, three steps below the most innovative paradigm represented by Evolutionary—Teal Organizations.

There are, however, signs of some movement toward more innovative organizational practices. Even if the progress made shows different intensities depending on the practice, some patterns emerge that can offer useful insights on what levers are more appropriate to push to foster organizational change.

The patterns identified in the research do not correspond directly with the three principles or breakthroughs (self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose) brought by Teal Organizations. In the case of Spanish public administrations, the study results show that the implementation of innovative organizational practices follows a model characterized by five dimensions that, instead, combine some of the elements of the three Teal principles. These results seem to imply that Laloux's theoretical framework is more useful when describing Teal Organizations as a destination of the organizational development journey than when analyzing how organizations advance along the development path.

According to this implementation model, progress toward more innovative organizational practices in Spanish public administrations is achieved mainly by introducing practices that, relying on more trustful relationships with employees, increase their involve-

ment and degree of autonomy (trust dimension), followed by practices that offer more flexibility to distribute the workload (task allocation dimension) and those that aim to improve the way meetings are managed (meetings management dimension).

In contrast, those practices leading to less-hierarchical organizations (hierarchy dimension) and those related to culture and values, community development, and alignment with the organizational goals (community and values dimension) contribute very little to this progress since they appear as hardly implemented. While resistance to depart from the hierarchical tradition characteristic of public administrations and move toward flatter organizations could be expected, especially when hierarchy is one of the principles for the action of public administrations that is recognized in the Spanish Constitution (article 103.1), the fact that so little attention is paid to the community and values dimension seems striking.

Contrary to other practices that require changes to the regulatory framework, like the implementation of flexible working hours and workplaces associated with teleworking that is getting traction in many public administrations, most practices associated with the community and values dimension could be introduced in public administrations without any need for modifying existing regulations, one of the main constraints hampering their adaptation, as argued above. This makes them good candidates as starting points for implementing organizational innovation.

Because values are embedded in their work as criteria for action, public administrations can benefit from addressing them more explicitly [74], considering that public employees seem to show differences with employees in the private sector in terms of identification with the organizational values and goals [75] and motivations [76]. In the specific case of Spain, paying more attention to values has been mentioned by scholars as a positive practice in their reflections about the future of the Spanish public service [23,77]; in that sense, one of the practical implications of the results of the present study is the confirmation of the scarce development of value-related practices among the Spanish public administrations.

This attention to values is also aligned with the recommendations made by the OECD to improve the ways of organizing and managing public employees [78]. One of the main action lines proposed in these recommendations is to build a values-driven public service, where commonly understood values guide a results-oriented and citizens-centered culture. This includes providing regular opportunities for all public servants to have frank discussions about values and their application, one of the Teal Organizations practices examined in this study. Additionally, public administrations should explore, as part of their initiatives to implement community and values practices, the possibilities offered by Public Service Motivation because of its potential association with improvements in performance [79,80].

Paying more attention to community and values practices also has practical implications from the sustainability management point of view. As pro-environmental innovations driven by employees are more likely to emerge in organizations where environmental concerns are largely integrated [81], implementing these practices would allow addressing employees' environmental concerns and integrating them into their daily routines, helping to foster sustainability innovation. In terms of further research, the connection with performance should be one of the areas for future work, investigating the influence of the degree of implementation of the innovative organizational practices examined in this study on the performance of the organizations implementing them to confirm if there is actually a performance improvement as the literature on Teal Organizations suggests.

Further investigation could also confirm if the implementation patterns for organizational innovation found in this research, which encompasses all levels of the Spanish public administration, can be found in individual organizations belonging to the Spanish public sector. In that sense, it would be interesting to collect the responses given by employees of a specific public administration (e.g., one single ministry, regional government department, or local government administration), the questionnaire developed for this research, and

compare the results of the statistical analysis of these responses to the result obtained in this study.

Another stimulating area for future research would be the realization of a longitudinal study to track the evolution of these practices over time in Spanish public administrations, as it could offer insights into the dynamics of organizational change in the public sector.

Finally, it would be interesting to conduct similar studies in public administrations in other nations. Specifically, it would be worth examining if the results in countries belonging to the Napoleonic and Germanic administrative traditions, where the culture of prescriptive legality is predominant [60], are comparable to those found in this study in the case of Spain.

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Appendix A. Questionnaire

English translation of the questions in Spanish included in the questionnaire to measure the implementation of Teal practices.

Item	Question	Minimum Value—1	Maximum Value—5
Hierarchical or flat structure	To what extent is the structure of your organization hierarchical or flat? A hierarchical or vertical structure is shaped like a pyramid, with many levels between the top management and the staff performing the tasks. A flat or horizontal structure has few levels and is based on self-organizing equipment.	Hierarchical structure	Flat structure
Centralized decision making	To what extent are decisions in your organization made centrally at the highest levels of the hierarchy, or are they made in a decentralized manner in places close to their implementation?	Centralized	Decentralized
Internal coordination meetings	To what extent is coordination in your organization achieved through meetings scheduled periodically at each hierarchical level, or through ad hoc meetings when the need arises?	Scheduled meetings	Ad hoc meetings
Meeting optimization	To what extent do meeting management practices exist in your organization to optimize the time spent, the number of attendees, and the results?	They do not exist	Frequent practices
Fixed job description	To what extent are job responsibilities in your organization based on a fixed job description, or a set of roles that can be flexibly combined?	Fixed description	Combination of roles
Role adjustment	To what extent is it possible in your organization to change responsibilities within the same position through a realignment of roles based just on an agreement with your peers?	Never	Always

Item	Question	Minimum Value—1	Maximum Value—5
Workplace flexibility	To what extent do workers in your organization have the flexibility to work out of the office?	No flexibility	Total flexibility
Working hours flexibility	To what extent have workers in your organization the flexibility to organize their working hours with freedom to choose the start and end of their working day?	No flexibility	Total flexibility
Future job fit assessment	During the recruitment of new members, to what extent do candidates meet with future colleagues to assess their fitness in your organization?	Never	Always
Culture knowing	During the onboarding of new members, to what extent do practices to know about the culture and to relate to future colleagues exist in your organization?	Practices do not exist	Frequent practices
Training responsibility	To what extent are employees responsible for their training and free to manage it, or are their training trajectories decided by others (e.g., the hierarchical superior or the Department of Human Resources)?	Decided by others	Employees responsible for their training
Information sharing	To what extent is information shared in your organization? Is information considered as a source of power and shared at the minimum quantity needed to perform the job properly, or is it shared in a transparent and open way, in real time and to everybody, including financial and remuneration information?	Only the minimum needed	Transparent and open way
Inclusive decision making	To what extent does the decision-making process in your organization take into account the views of those affected by the decision?	Never	Always
Meeting participants listening	To what extent do meeting management practices to ensure that all participants are heard exist in your organization?	Practices do not exist	Frequent practices
Conflict dealing	To what extent does your organization ignore the conflict between colleagues or deal fully with it, devoting time to identify and solve it?	Ignores conflict	Deals fully with it
Failure dealing	To what extent does your organization openly face failure (individual and collective) and use it as a learning tool?	Failure is not faced	Used as learning tool
Debates about values	To what extent are debates on values and rules of behavior encouraged in your organization?	Not encouraged	Frequently encouraged
Sense of community development	To what extent do practices aimed to develop a sense of community among colleagues exist in your organization? For example, meetings to share experiences, away days, virtual spaces on the Intranet.	Practices do not exist	Frequent practices
Values in daily practice	To what extent are your organization's values explicitly taken into account in daily practice?	Not taken into account	Very much taken
Purpose and goals alignment	To what extent do practices to align members around the purpose and objectives exist in your organization? For example, monographic meetings, work sessions, or virtual spaces dedicated to discussing purpose and objectives.	Practices do not exist	Frequent practices
Celebrations	To what extent do celebrations exist in your organization? For example, to celebrate collective achievements, outstanding individual contributions, or the arrival of new members.	No celebrations	Frequent celebrations

Item	Question	Minimum Value—1	Maximum Value—5
Working environment personalization	To what extent is your work environment a standardized, cold and impersonal place, or a warm and welcoming place that employees can decorate and customize to their liking?	Cold and impersonal	Warm and welcoming
Working environment as status symbol	To what extent does the working environment (office size, quality of furniture, access to natural light etc.) act as a symbol of status in your organization? For example, people with higher status (such as the highest positions in the hierarchy) have larger offices, better furniture, or more natural light.	It's a status symbol	It's not a status symbol

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