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## ICTS SUPPORTING TARGETMANIA

*How the UK Health Sector is Trying to Modernise*

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**Abstract:** This research is concerned with a globalising discourse of modernisation, in which information and communication technologies (ICTs) are deeply implicated. It examines efforts to modernise the emergency arm of the UK National Health Service (NHS) so that it is more responsive to contemporary public demands. Pervasive in managerial and ministerial discourses about modernising the NHS are perceived joint needs to change its culture and to mobilise the potential of information technology. Drawing from critical social theory, the main argument of this paper is that the way the ambulance services are regulated and monitored is giving rise to a modernisation programme in which cultural change and ICT innovation is being narrowly conceived in terms of achieving response time targets. So in this case the process of modernisation is acting to deny autonomy locally and reinforce a 1950s image of ambulance workers that they would reject as not at all modern.

**Keywords:** Modernisation, information systems, critical social theory, cultural change, health sector, performance targets.

### About the Author

**Kathy McGrath** is an information systems lecturer at Brunel University, UK. She was born in England, has a Masters degree in information systems from the London School of Economics (LSE), and has recently submitted her PhD at LSE. Her research focuses on the development, management and use of ICTs, and their organisational and social consequences. Kathy can be reached by e-mail at [Kathy.McGrath@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:Kathy.McGrath@brunel.ac.uk).