Chapter 4
ICT as the Path Beyond Bureaucracy?
The Use of ICT by Ignorance of the Citizens

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ABSTRACT

The article is trying to understand the reasons for the poor implementation of e-state tools as the principle of overcoming the bureaucratic processes. In this manner it follows the question of motivation which is further supplemented by survey results from Slovenia, showing general lack of motivation measured through the ignorance of technology potentials as well as of existing threats. The main argument of the article is, that lack of motivation will block any reform attempts by creating a negative human environment.

INTRODUCTION

Administrative science, in combination with other research fields deals with the all-important question about the reform of public administration towards the classical 3E model (increasing effectiveness, efficiency and economy of their services). This superficially managerial question in fact however has strong ideological roots in the modern state where economic consumerism is replacing the principle of the rule of law. Classical bureaucracy has been replaced by the new public management principles and then again transformed towards the so-called neo-Weberian state.

If the first concept was resting strongly on legal legitimacy and the rule of law (sometimes "ad absurdum"), new public management (NPM) demanded respect for law, but with understanding that different personal interests have the right to exist and to be followed within the legal regulation, as well as that a more effective, efficient and economical way to deliver public services should be developed. This often led to the privatization of public goods where neo-Weberianism in the mid-2000s started to defend a re-introduction of the state (see Drechsler, 2005; Drechsler and Kattel, 2008; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011), recognizing that after all the state cannot assume only the minimal role of taxing the population, while

providing essentially nothing in return – given that NPM was about privatizing almost everything from healthcare, education, research, development, security, and in most absurd cases partially even military. Others (e.g. Dunn and Miller, 2007), however, argue that the neo-Weberian state is more of a criticism of the previous state management approaches, rather than an answer to the everlasting issue of balance between public goods and their costs. Kuhlmann at al. (2008), on the other hand, offer arguments that, even in established democracies with long bureaucratic traditions, the administration cannot change its practices so easily and demands the strong role of the state back.

Under such circumstances of transitions from strong to lean administration and back, the technological development introduced the concept of the e-government/governance, and different correlating terms, such as smart cities (which under different names existed already before) to e-democracy and participative citizenship. States which believe that they are following the trends (if not even setting them) have been jumping from one buzzword to another, creating nothing but confusion amongst the population. However, at the same time they are often refusing ideas coming from citizens and show great fear from consequences of their own concepts.

This article aims to argue for a two-faced reality of the limited change potential, based on the case of Slovenia. Slovenia is amongst the countries which are following all modern trends in public administration, reaching from NPM to good governance, different "e"-concepts, up to smart cities - the objective being to reach the 3E goals. However, the results remain moderate, if there are any at all. There are two main reasons for this moderate success: first, there is insufficient political motivation for change (which is necessary for change to actually happen), and second, there is a lack of proper and honest evaluation of the addressed issues prior and after introducing the changes (which is necessary to know what and how to change). The common denominator of both issues is the lack of motivation (for the change). In general, it may appeal easy to blame politics and public administration for all bad, however the issue is deeper: Politicians are elected among citizens, and likewise, civil servants are merely citizens working for the state, which means that they are equals to the general population (with the potential to be hidden by the power of the sovereignty of the state in relation to their peers).

However, this means that one needs to question the general motivation for change and the general understanding of the concepts. It can be assumed that citizens have no motivation and no knowledge on modern administrative changes, which makes them ignorant towards the potentials certain changes might bear and consequently a top-down introduction of such changes would be nothing more but waste of budgetary (citizens') money.

In this perspective, the ICT environment of administrative changes was tested through a questionnaire amongst citizens in Slovenia's second largest city, Maribor, in order to understand potential success of introducing ICT driven administrative concepts, such as smart cities.

MOTIVATION FOR A CHANGE

As indicated earlier, one of the key problems of administrative change is motivation. By stating this, we assume that any change is possible if there is interest/motive to have it. In the opposite case change will not be introduced or it will be jeopardized to the level of absolute inefficiency. In political change management, it is possible to differentiate between two levels of motivation for change: superficial and real interest/motivation. Superficial motivation for change can be most accurately described as "empty words" which merely create budgetary expenses with (sometimes even expected and desired) no effect.

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