Chapter 1

The Awareness of Mentality in Public Administration as the Key for the Management of Its Complexity

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ABSTRACT

Public objectives are mostly pursued within public administration, which despite its apparent Weberian rationality works mainly evolutionarily – by imitating processes or things that prove to be effective in other areas. The present complexity cannot be grasped by endless enumeration of objective factors. Individual and personal characteristics that cannot be controlled only by the law can be a different starting point. Research should be moved to a higher level where they could be controlled and implemented through values if their basic human properties could be known that operate also within public administration. The situational and human complexity is so great that it can only be tamed step by step, through non-stop adjustments, using a central perspective on situations from the highest management. "Entering into the unknown fully prepared for changes" will be the motto of the public administration of the future.

A country normally has an administrative apparatus no worse than it deserves. - Kenneth J. Meier. Politics and the Bureaucracy

INTRODUCTION

The administrative apparatus has spread across all national and transnational societies as a spider web; even in times of economic crises in which the downsizing of a government apparatus is one of the usual austerity measures, there can be paradoxically more administration and regulation, as has already been noted by Vogel (1996) and Majone (1996), while at the same time new state coercions underlie new regulations.[1] Ideas about independent (continental) public agencies or other ideas about a better management

of public affairs cannot show the real background of the state of affairs,[2] and this cannot be objectively shown even in the presence of multiple other elements. The expansion of public tasks – with a larger degree of complexity and with the side effects of all previous reforms – automatically also brings about an increase in the importance of good management (that is shown *e.g.* in the notions of good administration, good governance, sound governance, co-governance) in public administration (PA). For Dworkin the representative democracy "is widely thought to be the institutional structure most suited in a complex and diverse society…[but] an actual vote in an election or referendum must be taken to represent an overall preference rather than some component of the preference that a skilful, cross-examination of the individual voter, if time and expense permitted, would reveal" (1978, p. 276). Are public officials those who could efficiently reveal this component of skilful preference due to citizens' lack of time and big expenses, as it has always been assumed? Today's *de facto* practices of officials show that it could be so in the majority of cases, while on the other hand the failures of their decisions in many cases show that officials may be lacking a deeper subjective understanding of their *own* decisions, *i.e.* of themselves. How can Weber's technical knowledge and experiences in the service of public officials[3] be paired with Hayek's statements on false rationalism and the greatest danger to liberty that today apparently comes from public servants?[4]

Much of writing on government is, due to its public power, directed to the hierarchical subordination to the management and to the rule of law, as well as to the control of bureaucracies and officials who implement decisions. But can only a technical, normative, audit or performance review achieve accountability and legitimacy, can administrative systems be held accountable and help societies without regulatory increases (these represented a paradox in the age of New Public Management in which privatisation and deregulation were high on its agenda)? How come that science of PA should be part of the integral theory that includes all aspects of the humans and their surroundings, while people still look at public problems mainly through the regulation, control and accountability? The detection of problems and their solutions are present also *outside* the regulation, but in the legal state the people should ask ourselves whether at the same time the recognised problems and their solutions could be valid also in the frame of the rule of law? Is it the failure of public management in treating people as a means and not as humans *per se*? To address the increasingly growing and complex problems, there is a need for a strong state, but usually it turns out that the dependence of people on the state is even greater; Weber is right when he asserts that "[e]very domination expresses itself and functions through administration" (1978, p. 948); how could then a strong state be possible and still be dependent on people?

People have the fundamental right of freedom of conscience, which operates also in the official's mind underneath his un/conscious states where decisions are formed. The key role in PA, as in other activities, is still played, as it has always been, by each individual (a functionary, a public servant) who through his/her work benefits the public system. Public servants have been too long – and especially in the public choice theory – regarded only as the self-interested decision-makers and implementers of such decisions, and not as representatives of the public interest. This can be refuted by the *Who you gonna call? Ghostbusters!* catchphrase: if something very unpleasant happened to you, dear reader, you would probably call the police, an ambulance, a fire department or some other unit of public administration whose officials might risk their lives to save yours. This kind of personal attitude is still the ghost, *i.e.* – and this is the main point of this paper – people do not know enough about the personal attitudes in public administration despite the fact that these attitudes are *sine qua non* for every good administration. The successes and failures of PA should be observed through the prism of the basic characteristics of the human mind. First, conditions in which the PAs do their daily assignments are examined; using the

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