Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary

Doctoral School of Faculty of Law

Headed by:

Prof. Dr. Éva Jakab Professor, Doctor of HAS

Ferenc Varga

The development of the relationship between public administration and citizens in the light of new technologies, with special regard to the spread of social media

Thesis booklet

Supervisor:

Dr. Gyula Balázs Csáki-Hatalovics Associate Professor

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1. Aims

The aim of my doctoral thesis is to explore the extent to which continuous technological development can facilitate communication between public administration (and in this sense public authorities) and the citizen, and what untapped areas or achievements it may have on the relationship between the state and the citizen. My aim is not primarily to present the IT tools and technologies used in the operation of the State or their integration in the operation of public administrations - there is a wealth of analysis and academic papers available on this subject. This does not mean, of course, that this process of adaptation has not had a beneficial effect on the efficiency of public administration and on interaction with citizens; on the contrary, in many cases it has been the technical solutions and systems used in public administration that have generated, for example, the development of certain ICT skills in citizens and have improved effective cooperation. At the same time, it should also be seen that almost all the technical solutions integrated into the functioning of the public machinery have been fed by 'civil' developments - from the telephone, personal computers and the Internet to the use of smart devices and, today, artificial intelligence. In some aspects, I will discuss them tangentially, but in a different context. Social networking sites are another worldwide phenomenon of the last almost two decades, based on citizen organisation and development, whose services are constantly expanding, so we cannot ignore the more "official" use of social media.

Along these considerations, I have examined the relationship between the state and, within it, between the administrative activity and the person administered, and its evolution, i.e. how the attitude of those exercising public authority towards citizens (clients) has changed, what rights they have been granted to act and interact as equal partners. I have briefly sought to explore the evolution of the application of technical advances in this direction, the underlying motives that have facilitated the process under study and, in turn, the recent conceptions that place the state and the client in this relationship, even in ways that measure its effectiveness. At the same time, the expansion and significant proliferation of non-state-generated channels of expression naturally raises the need for their 'official' application. With the development and almost unlimited availability of the Internet, the emergence of bottom-up online communities, and the possibility of reaching larger numbers of people at the same time, social platforms can certainly take communication and interaction to a new level. In recent years, the focus of my research has been on the extent to which and the way in which the different levels

of public administration use these social platforms, i.e. whether the state itself is able to develop this segment of cooperation in the same way.

To achieve the objectives of this dissertation, focusing on the research task, I first examined the state's efforts to provide the rights and technical facilities that underpin citizens' effective e-participation in their interactions with the state. I then looked at the considerations underpinning the way in which the state seeks to use these to make the citizen a verifiably engaged public customer. Finally, I looked at the use of social media at different levels of the state, and the quality and measurability of its role in the interaction.

I have tried to write this paper with the intention of scientific detachment and objectivity, if it sometimes feels political scientific, I have not aimed to evaluate or qualify the performance of any individual, body or government, but only to record the conclusions drawn from the sources and the results of the data. In the case of national and international measurements and international research, I have briefly presented the findings and results and tried to draw conclusions. My aim was to examine a phenomenon or process in an interdisciplinary, generalist and holistic approach, even considering opposing views and positions, respecting the principles of scientific freedom.

2. Methodology

My dissertation draws primarily on library and literary sources, mainly monographs, studies, articles, commentaries, statistical analyses, data and legal materials. In addition to the domestic literature, I have drawn primarily on English-language sources from the available foreign-language literature. I have also examined the domestic results on the use of social media using a software tool in the context of my own analyses, in several cases together with my colleagues - for three years now. In this thesis I will also present the studies I have carried out with my fellow researchers, both at the top and at the bottom level of public administration. In my independent empirical research on the social media activity of domestic ministers, I also conducted a comparative analysis of the social media communication of health ministries in four European countries during the pandemic. In the case of ministers, I conducted a content analysis of their Facebook posts to get an idea of the extent to which those at the top of the administration use the platform for political (i.e. more personal) and public (i.e. more political) purposes in their interactions with citizens. In the case of the health ministries, I tried to find out the proportion of official information on the epidemic within the policy communication, i.e. the extent to which citizens were informed in a credible way. In

addition, I wanted to see how the success of communication through social media platforms used by public administrations could be measured. To do this, I also examined international research findings, both at governmental and local level.

3. Content overview

The dissertation is divided into five major chapters. In the first chapter, I examined the process by which the citizen is transformed from a "subject" into a client, at the end of which certain rights of clients are given constitutional force in our country. In the second chapter, I present the technological process that has underpinned the need for a customer-centred service state, which has been primarily driven by the New Public Management (NPM) and has established an openness towards citizens in the relationship between the state and its citizens. At the same time, in the third chapter, I will try to point out that a purely service-oriented approach to the state can lead to an emptying out of the state, which can be an obstacle to the realisation of the stated objectives and can lead to an erosion of trust in the relationship between the state and the customer. Accordingly, I will also present the need for change in the neo-Web conception of the state and the efforts to measure how citizen participation in the civil and public spheres has changed. In the fourth chapter, I examine the role of community platforms in the world and then their emergence and application at the level of public affairs. The Obama administration has made social media use mandatory for government agencies, but its application has shown mixed results, so it was necessary to present a government framework, which naturally raises the question of the lower levels of scrutiny. Accordingly, I compare the experiences at local level with the possibilities of developing a framework for measuring social media platforms at international level. National level studies have been conducted at all levels of public administration, but evaluable results have been obtained more at the municipal level. Thus, in its absence, I attempt to explore the possibility of measuring Facebook use by domestic municipalities and make thought-provoking suggestions for central-level planning.

I hope that the conclusions I draw will help both theorists and practitioners to put the latest options into practice and to inform further research.

4. Main findings and results

In my doctoral dissertation, I examined the development of citizens' client status and participation in public affairs, including e-citizenship, in a historical context, i.e. how the state

and public administration perceived the rights of citizens as clients and what content they wanted to give them. In other words, what was the process by which public administrations gave customers the guarantees and rights to become willing and able 'digital' citizens in their relations with the state. This is, of course, only possible through the provision of technical conditions, which I have also traced in the form of a historical process and specific implementation models. Both processes have, so to speak, taken place independently in their own natural context, but, in my view, they have become mutually generating processes, influenced by organisational and organisational approaches to efficiency, transparency, e-inclusion and service provision. In the process, there have naturally been both paths and detours, but all the efforts and ameliorative intentions of the last quarter of the 20th century have been directed towards elevating the citizen as much as possible to the status of an equal partner. This desire for improvement has also guided its efforts to strike a balance between management tools and classic bureaucratic instruments, which has been complemented by the state's desire to measure, examine and review the results and quality of its efforts with the aim of improvement. At this point, however, a new phenomenon, the massive online presence of the public, has brought new opportunities for communication, which, as I have described in the discussion, have repeatedly raised new questions and problems, and it was therefore justified to examine them in greater depth.

4.1   Changes in client status

I started my analysis with the evolution of the relationship between the state and the client. In feudal societies, the relationship between the administration and the client as subject was determined by the order and the vassalage, and privileges or the almost total absence of rights were developed accordingly. In the 16th century, Bodin still describes the administered as subjects who obey the ruled in everything. The 17th and 18th centuries saw the re-emergence of the centralised organisation of the state, and the emergence of the modern monarchies laid the foundations for modern public administration, which was undoubtedly based on the chamberlain system that had emerged, especially in the German-speaking world. In the continental legal territories, cameralistics was already characterised by regular observations, records and the training of qualified civil servants, who laid the foundations for the 'good' governance and administration of Germany and Austria. In the Allgemeines Landrecht of 1794, the person as individual was introduced, and the aim of public policy was to maintain a balance between individual and communal interests. With the bourgeois transformation, public administration became a democratic administration of the public interest under the rule

of law, with the participation of the population. In the early 19th century, Humboldt was already writing about civil welfare, with the state's main task being to guard security. Cameralistics was a theory of administration based on law and order that laid the foundations for political economy and von Stein's theory of public administration. Liberal economic management during the industrial revolutions created the socially vulnerable citizen, which a reorganised administration like Lorenz von Stein's can provide for, creating his well-being. In the Anglo-Saxon countries, until the 19th century, public affairs could be understood at the level of insular communities operating under a system of patronage, which failed to fulfil the real purpose of bureaucracy. The attempt to overcome this was developed along the lines of Taylor's theory of industrial organisation, which was not successful in itself because of the specific features of public administration. However, it led to the development of President Wilson's theory of administration and then Weber's theory of ideal bureaucracy, which was already clearly delineated by the need for organisational structure and operation and hierarchical organisation. In his theory, the bureaucracy deals with its clients' matters in a transparent, precise, professional and impartial manner.

The world wars and crises of the 20th century made the need to strengthen public administration, especially against the legislature, increasingly evident - that is, to give the administration itself real independence. Strong and consistent implementation, concentration of power, absolute obedience to the head of the executive, the president, the party leader, were expected everywhere, while at the same time, in Ernst Forsthoff's view, the main aim of public service to citizens as customers became the satisfaction of needs, i.e. the concept of a customer-centred welfare service state. By the second half of the 20th century, the effectiveness of this rigid model of public administration, which was subject to absolute obedience, had eroded again, and the organisational elements of the private sector had come to the fore again, with the economic approach of NPM coming to the fore. The NPM approach also generated in governments the will to fix the rights of customers. The Citizen's Charter and the White Paper have already seen citizens (customers) as consumers with a right to expect quality service in their relations with the state, and bureaucracies must operate institutions that seek to meet these consumer expectations in terms of quality, in accordance with quasi-consumer protection core documents that guarantee quality. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which became a fundamental requirement of the EU with the Lisbon Treaty, contains several fundamental principles, rights and freedoms that reinforced the right to a fair trial, although approximated at the level of fundamental rights,

but also implicitly generalised in the administration of public authorities (non-discrimination, impartial, fair and timely administration, liability for damages). On this basis, the European Union has drawn up several documents setting out a number of principles on the institutional functioning of public administrations, which must be applied in contacts and administrative procedures. These principles have also been implemented in Hungarian legislation, both in the legal system as a whole and in the specific administration of public authorities. Our acts on public administration and their amendments have gradually clarified and broadened the applicable principles, and technological progress has introduced new procedural principles. The Eat. and then the Ket. introduced the possibility of electronic administration, which on the one hand created the recognition of electronic communication and the evidentiary value of statements made electronically. In other words, the conditions for becoming an e-citizen were also beginning to be established in national legislation. Our Constitution of 2011 raised the right to due process, including the right to proper administration and the right to electronic administration and communication to constitutional level, and in 2016, with the repeal of the Ket. the Parliament settled Ákr. Act. This Act, which is significantly shorter than the Ket, seeks only to set out the rules that are truly common to all procedures, clarifying the guarantees set out in the Ket. The provisions of principle, on the other hand, already contain general rules derived from the Fundamental Law which have become the rules to be followed by all agencies involved in the administration of the case, at all stages of the procedure.

4.2   *Technological developments in relationship*

The other strand of the process was to examine the results of technological progress. The computer revolution of the 1980s has infiltrated the public sector, although much more slowly than the private sector. Institutional adaptations, whether in a bank or a public authority, faced several challenges. First, they had to create a willingness to use among employees, i.e. a sense that using tools, programs and ultimately a new programming language would improve their work efficiency. Secondly, management's willingness to adapt had to be achieved, i.e. it had to be made clear that the management decision-making mechanism could be made faster and more efficient. This was achieved initially by using expert systems to facilitate management, providing "if-then" decision alternatives, then decision support systems to better serve the needs of the end user, and later by using applications resulting from the complex development of both. Thirdly, the return on the investment costs of the innovation in terms of results had to be reviewed, i.e. the willingness to use the resources. Finally, these developments led us to the development of the first e-government models, under the influence of NPM organisational

theory. Governments' efforts to increase openness, transparency, efficiency and citizen participation have been aimed at developing e-government, which has become a de facto benchmark for democracy.

A number of theories and models have emerged, but all have advocated a citizen-centred, fast and efficient service function on the outside, and a linking of horizontal and vertical systems on the inside, to overcome cumbersome and often fragmented operations. The first step was the presence on the internet, the second was the possibility of back-and-forth information interaction with citizens - i.e. two-way communication, and the third was the availability of transactions (financial and other services) running on separate platforms. Lastly, the vertical and horizontal integration of the public administration's organisational system has been achieved, i.e. by linking institutions at different levels but carrying out the same activity and institutions at the same level but carrying out different activities (one-stop shop). At this point, it is already established that the customer can contact the executive system at any point in the matrix, that his case will be forwarded to the competent level and body within the shortest possible time, and that data interoperability and accessibility with appropriate guarantees have been established. However, intentions and expectations were ahead of reality at many points, and although the basic eGovernment nomenclatures (information and non-transactional services) were widely accepted, the development of eGovernment has not progressed as predicted by the main normative models in the field. Thus, e-government, even in the first decade after the turn of the millennium, was still mainly informational, and contrary to the models' predictions, it was only to a limited extent interactive or transactional and did not progress towards an interactive and transactional state at the same pace. Recognising this, governments have sought to redefine the concepts of e-government, e-governance, e-democracy and participation, which means renewing the role of government to create good public administration and ultimately good governance in partnership with citizens. I hope that Act CIII of 2023 on the Digital State and on Certain Rules for the Provision of Digital Services will further strengthen this process.

4.3   *The relationship between the good state and the customer*

While there were efforts to meet the objectives set out in the first two chapters in terms of content, organisation and infrastructure, the desired objectives were not always met at the expected pace, as the resources used were substantial in amount but variable in availability. To this end, the role of the State needs to be rethought and a number of documents and action plans have been drawn up at institutional level. In the 1970s, the scale of the tax burden,

which financed the 'welfare state', also jeopardised the functioning of the market, and the main reason for the rise of the NPM in all developed countries was the over-large size of public administrations, which absorbed ever greater budgetary resources, which in turn led to a steady increase in public expenditure. This led to the need to streamline public administration and reduce the importance of the state, in parallel with the technical achievements that were intended to achieve good governance. On the one hand, this has undoubtedly led to an improvement in the approach to the use of technology, but at the same time the budgetary resources devoted to change have remained considerable, with only discreet results in terms of effectiveness, and the role of the state has also diminished considerably, its capacity for real intervention has been reduced. At the same time, it is undisputed that the NPM generated the concept of good governance, which underpinned citizen e-participation, and then e-governance, the successful elements of which were eventually adapted by the NWS.

This is why, with the NWS concept, after the turn of the millennium, the strengthening of the role of the state as a partner and the restoration of its monopoly on public power, the strengthening of the executive sector and its functions, without prejudice to representative democracy, which sought to retain the elements that characterise the competitive sphere but which also operate effectively in public administration, came to the fore again. In addition to the need for ex-post monitoring and measurement of processes in order to achieve good governance. This change of approach was mainly developed in the continental jurisdictions, and in Hungary it became more widespread after the first ten years after the turn of the millennium. I have presented some international examples for assessing good governance - Eurostat, UN, UN Development Program, OECD, GoG, WGI indicators. All of these provide mainly time series data for international comparability, with targets, principles or sub-indicators to be achieved for good governance, and by looking at these together it is possible to examine in detail a country's efforts in good governance, including public participation and e-inclusion. Recognising this, the Hungarian Government, drawing partly on international data, has sought to examine the effectiveness of government in a complex system of good governance and, within this, public participation. In 2013, the National University of Public Service started to develop a framework of indicators and frameworks for the evaluation of government (Good Governance Indicator, GGI), which aims to provide continuous feedback on changes in government effectiveness and quality in eight areas of governmental effectiveness: trust and security, community well-being, economic competitiveness and fiscal

balance, democracy, rule of law, sustainability and effective public administration. Changes measured in each year were reported each year between 2015 and 2019. For the purposes of my topic, I have briefly examined these reports in two dimensions of impact, democracy and effective public administration, on the one hand, and the conditions of citizens' democratic engagement in the processes of public authorities, on the other. The measures and data sources for the democracy dimension have changed over the years, in my view in the drive for more accurate evaluation, but basic conclusions can be drawn. A glaring deficiency in the reports is that it did not look at data on participation either online or through social media (i.e. civic), it only gave results for voting. There have been clear successes in terms of access to electronic public services and the number of cases that can be handled online, as well as the time taken to complete them. Clearly, changes resulting from legal obligations have driven the growth in data, but the technical improvements that have been made throughout the enforcement system are a clear sign of the state's commitment. In other words, it has not only imposed obligations - interpreted in a certain sense (on businesses) - but has also created the conditions for them, thereby significantly increasing the demand from natural persons for services that can be accessed electronically. This is a clear sign of citizens' commitment to eParticipation, as it has made it measurably faster, simpler and more convenient for them to contact, communicate and manage their affairs. There has been a clear development in the eParticipation of citizens and the digital presence of the State, and the necessary framework is not only in place, but is also under continuous development.

4.4 *Social media as a new platform for state-citizen relations*

According to Data Reportal's latest annual report, nearly forty percent of internet usage was on social media platforms and accounted for nearly five billion users. Between 70 and 80 percent of internet users in the Americas and Europe also use social media platforms. The four most widely used social platforms are Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and WhatsApp, with three quarters of users using all four services simultaneously and more than half of users using Facebook, Instagram and Twitter[1] to get up-to-date information. Facebook has nearly three billion users and Twitter, which is very popular in the US, has over half a billion users, making it a dominant source of news. The importance of the latter is underlined by the fact that the sites with the largest followings include former presidents. This is an indication of the dominant presence of social media in the US administration, a process that is still in its infancy on the European continent.

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[1] It is already 'X' now, but I use consequently 'Twitter'

The Memorandum, which entered into force in 2009, has significantly increased the use of community platforms in governance, but there have been difficulties in implementing the Regulation, as this type of communication is not the traditional top-down (pair) talk, and it has been necessary to find ways to fit it into existing mechanisms and to set up a framework or metrics to interpret and analyse interactions correctly. All this should be done while maintaining transparency, organisational culture and efficiency.

Mergel has set out an interaction-based framework for understanding how different levels of citizen interaction with government and public administration help to support the objectives of a public administration and its engagement with citizens using social media channels. The framework enables government professionals to explore how information shared is disseminated, received and reacted to in the social network, thus enabling them to create more targeted messages for people.

At the lower level, in the case of the Anglo-Saxon municipalities, it was confirmed that most of them remained at the level of information and consultation, with one or two cases of cooperative involvement, but no cases of citizen empowerment. Accordingly, there were positive examples of two-way interaction, but they did not empower citizens. Studies based on the Western European framework have specifically analysed the social media activity of municipalities and confirmed the mixed attitude of the local level towards social media platforms. As regards the presence and activity levels of individual municipalities on the social media platforms analysed, around half of the municipalities had no active presence on any of the social networks analysed, so that the main factor determining their presence on social media is the political will and specific circumstances of each municipality. The results of the Central and Eastern European frameworks show that, for local authorities, traditional administrative information has not become a significant form of communication, with a preference for tabloid-style content.

After the international outlook, the Hungarian results showed a similar picture. The ministries, while providing information, did not show any sense of planning and shared content of a political nature. Unfortunately, it can also be noted that the number of ministry posts is very low, which points to the fact that most of the time it was done in an ad hoc manner. In the studies on ministers, the mixed communication was even more pronounced, and they were mainly engaged in political communication, making them less suitable for administrative analysis, which also included personal (private) communications, i.e. the dichotomy was also a feature of ministers. In the lower-level studies, I concluded that the smaller the municipality

is, the more meaningful the administrative communication related to the basic tasks. In the case of county municipalities, both the analysis of the content of posts and their impact analysis confirmed that, on the one hand, posts were of a bulk nature and had a higher proportion of access to posts on public affairs than at the ministry and ministerial level, but that they were mostly posts on the daily life of the municipality, events and possibly personal ambitions. Even in smaller municipalities, local programmes and various cultural, leisure and social events were more successful, but as the size of the municipality decreased, it was also evident that content related to basic tasks, or the work of the municipality and its administration attracted more activity from citizens. Also, two-way communication, where the municipality or an official respond, was more common in municipalities with less than 8,000 inhabitants.

In my view, clear guidelines need to be developed at all levels of public administration to ensure that social media staff can always adapt to the changing environment. Therefore, it is essential that they choose the right tactics based on a well-developed strategy. Accordingly, I have proposed a guide to help develop a strategy and, as international and national experience has shown that the success of interactions with citizens can be better measured at the local level of public administration, I have proposed a measurement framework for the most widely used Facebook pages, applicable to local authorities, to measure the success of public administration messages in engaging with citizens. It is my hope that the suggestions made at the end of the dissertation and the framework developed can help further the work of practitioners and theorists in the field. And by testing the framework in practice, and possibly improving it, local governments can also maintain more successful relations with their citizens through more planned communication of administrative content.

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