

DO PUBLIC VALUES HELP CREATING EFFECTIVENESS, CAPACITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE ROMANIAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM?

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ABSTRACT

Starting from the definition of the term 'value' and entering the public value literature, I am going to analyze the way institutions and citizens play their roles in public problems solving (with examples from Romanian public administration). Research and action plans are to be pursued in order to create and maintain public administration accountability. Between theory and practice, Romanian public administration has to respond to new challenges and create a collaborative governance.

KEYWORDS: *approach, dialogue, evidence, goal, procedure.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Values within vision and mission

In the context of globalization, the specificity of the public administration system is given through the values that guide a particular community. If an academic mission is 'to create an interdisciplinary educational and research context, conducive to the formation of future elites of the economic, social and administrative environment by developing skills and competencies specific to the fields of administrative science and sociology, able to meet economic, social and environmental challenges,' (The Bucharest University of Economic Studies' site – the Faculty of Administration and Public Management), the answer for the administrative practice lies with the continuing evolution of public administration thinking and practice.

There is a need to clarify the meaning of the following concepts: value, public value, public values, and the public sphere. Are they operationalized? Important challenges have risen to prominence when referring to these concepts.

1.2. Between theory and practice or what definitions can bring

According to different dictionary definitions of 'value' as 'something worth, the degree in which someone/sth is important or useful (Macmillan English Dictionary, 2002, p.1588) or 'the quality of being useful' (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2005, p.1693) the concept may suggest that:

- the objects of value are subjective psychological states or objective states of the world;
- value is intrinsic, extrinsic, or relational;
- something is valuable for its own sake or as a means to something else;
- there are hierarchies of values;
- the doer of valuing should have a very clear assessment pattern (criteria, the valuing manner);
- how the valuing is done; and against what criteria the object of value is measured.

An emphasis on public values, a recognition that government has a special role as a guarantor of public values, a belief in the importance of public management broadly conceived and of the service

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to and for the public, a heightened focus on citizenship and democratic and collaborative governance have occurred.

The representatives of the new approach see public value emerging from broadly inclusive dialogue and deliberation. This includes community members from multiple sectors because, 'public values and public value are not the exclusive province of government, nor is government the only set of institutions having public value obligations' (Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007 in Bryson, et al., 2014).

Through the same approach, Boyte (2011) explains 'public work,' as 'self-organized, sustained efforts by a mix of people who solve common problems and create things, material or symbolic, of lasting civic value'. Civic learning becomes part of the process. Citizens change their 'roles as voters, clients, constituents, customers, or poll responders into problem solvers, co-creators, and governors actively engaged in producing what is valued by the public and good for the public' (Bryson, et al., 2014). Value is, from such a perspective:

- common good, determined by dialogue;
- worth, usefulness of something;
- principles or standards of behaviour;
- quality;

There are some other distinct voices that have labelled value in a specific way. Meynhardt (2009 in Bryson, et al., 2014), sees value as coming from the public, when it is "drawn from the experience of the public." The relationship between the individual and the society is the source of value creation. Last but not least the concept of the public sphere is defined by John Benington (2011) as "web of values, places, organizations, rules, knowledge, and other cultural resources held in common by people through their everyday commitments and behaviours, and held in trust by government and public institutions" (Bryson, et al., 2014).

1.3. Public value relating to other concepts

Several other important concepts that make the governing mechanism a broader public action, connect theory to practice. Among these concepts are the public interest, the common good, public goods, and commonwealth. The idea of creating public value has been used as a paradigm through "public value management" that would be better suited to networked governance than traditional public administration or the New Public Management. The real performative analysis has been about public value as performance. Under such an angle, public value can serve as 'a performance measurement and management framework'. Andersen et al. (2012) have launched an instrument for assessing public value 'derived from four archetypal modes of governance (hierarchy, clan, network, and market)'. The role of public organizations, the citizens' role, the organizational context, the control forms have been included here and seven dimensions of public value emerged: the public at large, rule abundance, budget, keeping, professionalism, balancing interests, efficient supply, and user focus (all these dimensions have been tested on Danish public managers' work).

Public value and the realization of public values, as well as the preservation and enhancement of the public sphere are possible through people's work in institutions and through processes that form: a broad environmental and intellectual context;

- public work and civic learning;
- inclusive dialogue and deliberation.

It has been stated by practitioners and researchers that the actual public value has been created by 'policies, programs, projects, and other efforts (Kernaghan, 2003, in Bryson, et al., 2014).

1.4. Questions in the public sphere

New challenges have developed a public spiritedness that emerged from dialogue and analyses. Public values provided normative consensus about:

- citizens' rights, benefits, prerogatives;
- citizens' obligations to society, the state and to one another;

- the principles on which governments and policies should be based.

The public sphere as a democratic space and a web of values, organizations, rules, knowledge, cultural resources held in common by people has become an environment of proliferating partnerships. The actors of such a space are:

- the government as a creator of public value;
- organizations;
- managers.

The questions that have been asked regarding the public sphere targeted the concept of value:

- is value intrinsic, extrinsic or relational?
- who does the valuing?
- how is the valuing done and to which criteria is measured?
- are there hierarchies of values?

2. ACCOUNTABILITY: PAST INTO PRESENT?

Very many voices would say that there is no real definition for “accountability”. Would it be more effectiveness? There are several main components:

- a practice;
- a set of ideas;
- a ‘specified other’
- control involving the executive, the legislative and the judicial;
- authority within government.

There has been, still is and the difference will continue to exist between the public sector accountability and the private sector one. According to Forrer et al., (2010) there are ‘three types of controls that have evolved to ensure public accountability: accountability to other governmental bodies, hierarchical accountability, and accountability to impersonal standards’.

There are changed demands referring to public accountability if public private partnerships occur. New approaches to both domains management are necessary. The permanent comparison between the public sector and the private one has brought a permanent question that has not been answered completely as neither researchers or practitioners could find a very clear answer. The question targets business-like practices that might enhance efficiency and effectiveness of public organizations. The arguments seem to show the path that has to be followed. These practices might:

- reduce deficit and public debt;
- increase the quality of the public services delivered;
- introduce competition;
- create market/semi market mechanisms;
- use performance indicators.

Very many Romanian town halls, city halls, county councils or town/commune councils have initiated and entered interesting and useful projects that have targeted:

- financing digital competences for small and medium enterprises’ employees;
- cultivating a closer connection between the citizen and the state,
- creating stable and predictable collaboration relations;
- (flexible institutions);
- practicing modern management, motivating and training skilled civil servants.

Maintaining public trust in public sector accountability shows the public interest through multisector delivery of public services. Managing accountability in public sector involves balancing the myriad public demands: cost-effectiveness, risk sharing, innovation, reliability, timeliness, transparency, and security. These risks have been analysed in the public private partnerships. (Forrer et al., 2010).

3. ROMANIAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND CITIZENS’ PROBLEMS SOLVING

Drivers for ‘value’ in Romanian public administration have worked for:

- rising public expectations of more accessible and flexible services;
- encouraging wider participation in public policy development;
- adding EU value through networking and good practice dissemination;
- allowing and encouraging competition;
- showing impartiality and equity.

In what that follows I am going to display several examples that I have extracted from the sites of the Bucharest, Constanța, Cluj-Napoca, Craiova, Oradea and Timișoara city halls.

Bucharest City Hall site is focused on the transparency aspect, displaying very many aspects of the administrative activities. However, when it comes to projects that target citizens’ quality life the answer remains at the ‘image’ level(no concrete measures):

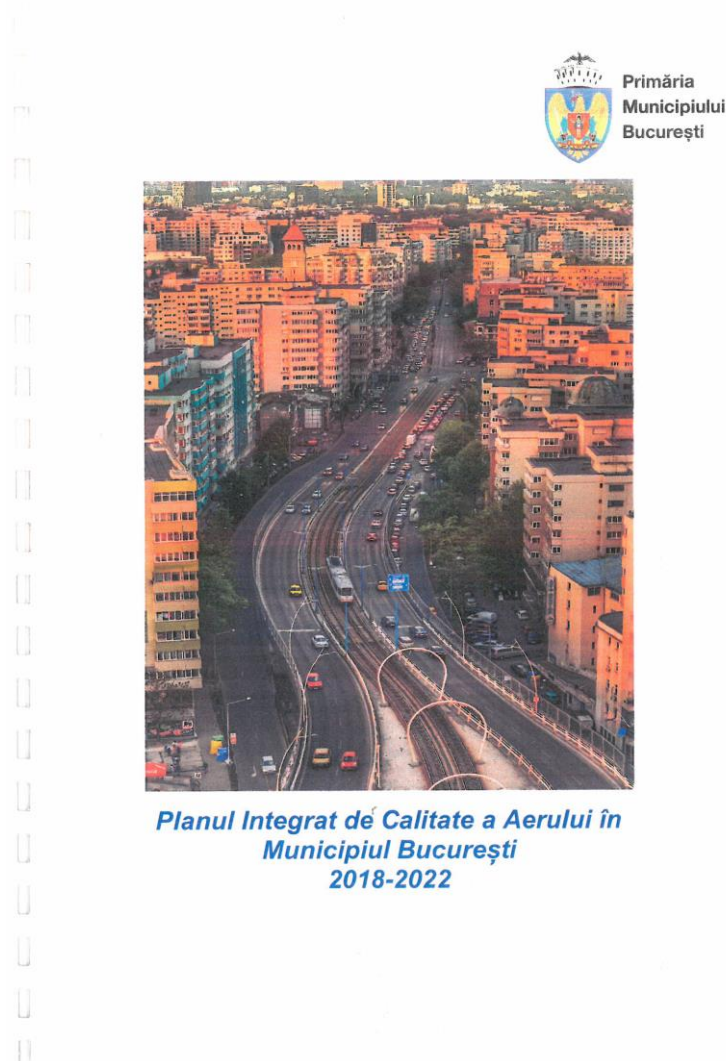


Figure 1. Air Pollution in Bucharest

Source: National Agency for Medium Protection

Constanța City Hall assumes the responsibility for the whole metropolitan area, displaying until 2023 300 projects. Both Cluj and Timișoara City Halls have drawn mobility projects. While Timișoara projects display a vision, mission and objectives, Cluj- Napoca launches ‘rethinking Someș’. Iași City Hall has a very clear message about its mission and perspectives:

Mission

Our mission includes providing quality public services in the field of local public administration.
View

The City Hall of Iasi, as a member of the Association of Romanian Municipalities has as its vision the permanent satisfaction of customers (individuals and legal entities), employees, appreciated as collaborators and civil society, aiming to become a regional and national leader.

Strategy

Our perspective objectives follow 4 perspectives:

FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE - with the objective of optimizing the use of financial resources based on local and service fees and taxes, clearly defined and providing long-term investment funds necessary for their improvement.

CLIENT'S PERSPECTIVE - with the objective of being permanently around the current and potential client, with the perception of his desires, needs and increasing the degree of responsibility / promptness vis-à-vis the CLIENT.

Responsibility/promptness; Partnership with the client (citizens and economic agents); Satisfying the client's expectations, regarding the services offered, being united in a belief, in an idea: our services are the best.

PERSPECTIVE OF INTERNAL PROCESSES

We are integrated in the public administration, more precisely in the field of local public administration, and we permanently use the synergistic effect.

We cooperate in partnership with our clients (public and legal entities), trying to obtain advantages from the value, insight, intelligence of their services.

We operate within a management system, based on international standards, which we implement and continuously improve. In the field of quality, the City Hall of Iași is certified since 2006 according to the ISO 9001: 2001 standard, and in 2009 it was recertified according to the ISO 9001: 2008 standard. The staff, the collaborators are directly responsible for the quality of their work and fully aware of their actions.

We aim to maximize our competitiveness.

LEARNING-DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

We started the development of a strategy for training, educating and empowering the staff of the municipality, in the idea of their permanent attraction to the interests of society. We want to increase their self-responsibility, thus favoring the reactions within the organization and facilitating the application in practice, moving from working through subordination to cooperation and internal collaboration.

WE CONSIDER THE MOTIVATION, INITIATIVE, SPECIALIZATION AND QUALIFICATION of the staff as **DETERMINANTS** within the organizational policy.

Qualification and specialization of staff for their work through attractive courses, such as active training.

Permanent comparison of our performances with those of other institutions, with the same specificity, from the local public administration. Continuous improvement of internal and external communication.

Pursuing the balance between youth and staff experience.

We are increasingly concerned with **INTANGIBLE VALUES**: our brand "Institution of the MAYOR", the image of the MUNICIPALITY, the knowledge and experience of employees, practically, the totality of the intellectual patrimony of the organization. These notions include: integrity, capacity for innovation, creativity, team orientation, in addition to tolerance, sustainability, awareness of respect for the citizen, social responsibility.

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Craiova City Hall displays the Ethic Code of the administrative staff while the Oradea City Hall is informing its citizens about a very challenging project that involves several countries: Art Nouveau 2:

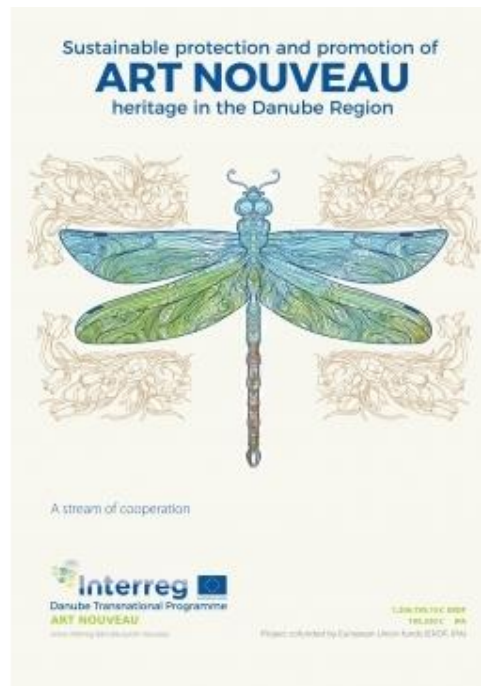


Figure 2. Sustainable protection and promotion of Art Nouveau heritage in the Danube Region

Source: Interreg Europe (2020)

Oradea City Hall through the Institution of the Chief Architect (IChA) won last year an important project with European funding entitled "Strengthening the cultural identity in the Danube region starting from the common heritage of Art Nouveau", the acronym of the project being Art Nouveau 2.

The project "Strengthening the cultural identity in the Danube region starting from the common Art Nouveau heritage" takes place between November 2020 - December 2022 and has a total budget of 1,827,119 euros, budget distributed among the 9 partners involved: Oradea City Hall as leader project, Oradea City Museum - Cultural Complex, National Heritage Institute of Romania, Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest - Hungary, Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna - Austria, Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb - Croatia, Technical University of Bratislava - Slovakia, Kodolanyi Janos University in Hungary and the National Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments in Serbia. The most important axes of the Art Nouveau 2 project are: the development of education and professional research in the knowledge of Art Nouveau, urban planning, the promotion of Art Nouveau heritage - a section closely related to tourism and the celebration of International Art Nouveau Day in 2021 and 2022.

The Institution of the Chief Architect will use the budget allocated by the project to achieve the following objectives: elaboration of a mobility study in the central part of the city; the elaboration of a feasibility study for the transformation of a public space identified on the basis of the mobility study into a space that favours sustainable mobility; organizing a summer school for urban planners in Oradea, which will bring together urban planners from all countries participating in the project, a school whose purpose is to achieve an exchange of experience with some of the best architects in

Europe; a training course for Oradea tourist guides, in the sense of promoting the Art Nouveau heritage; creating a set of materials to promote the city's Art Nouveau heritage and distributing them to tour operators, as well as organizing World Art Nouveau Day in 2021 and 2022.

4. INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS

- a good governance implies the quality of the public-sector activities, managing is facilitating;
- an efficient public sector means turning investments into genuine results for citizens;
- public sector quality is obtained through consensus and trust;
- the study of public values is gaining in importance;

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