

SMART ADMINISTRATION– REALLY? WHY NOT?

INTRODUCTION

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Public administration, smart organization

ABSTRACT

In an increasingly smarter world, where increasingly more areas of social life are encompassed by “smart solutions”, public administration cannot remain on the outside or in opposition to this process. The scholars of the Section of the Public Administration System at the Institute of Administrative Sciences of Faculty of Law, Administration and Economics at the University of Wrocław, have decided to devote a collective publication to the matter of smart administration. The articles comprising this volume present a rich array of topics related to the issue of smart administration, as each of the authors has chosen a different area of administrative activity.

I. INTRODUCTION

The authors of this collective monograph are aware of the effect of their first encounter with the title of the monograph. Intelligence¹ can be associated with various semantic contexts, but the very assumption of the existence of smart

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¹ Intelligence (intelligent) and smartness (smart) are used interchangeably in this article. Both terms are used to express the Polish term “inteligencja” (inteligentny) and the German term “Intelligenz” (intelligent)

administration creates doubts for the reader, whereas proving that smart administration is working, or can work, inspires questioning it. Administration is perceived by society as a place in which activities required by law are performed by imitation and therefore not creatively and rather not smartly. It is not without reason that the criticism of the Weberian model contained in the term “bureaucratic timewasting” has been and still is referred mainly to the administrative office, where Veblen’s “cult of incompetence” and Crozier’s “vicious circle of bureaucracy” prevail², which justifies the refusal to attribute intelligence to administration. Fundamental doubts also arise as to whether the term “intelligence” can be referred to all to public administration as an institution instead of to a human as an individual.

“Intelligence” is a term created on the basis of psychology in connection with the study of man’s ability to perceive the world around him, the ability to analyse and understand it and, consequently, to learn and the ability to use this knowledge and the acquired skills to cope with the problems encountered and to adapt to the changes in his environment. Research into human intelligence starts at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and is related to the objective of establishing the essence of human mental abilities and the factors that shape them, as well as the differences between people in this light; hence the first attempts to measure the level of intelligence from the early 20th century. According to Francis Galton (1822–1911), intelligence is a fundamental capability of the mind determining the individual’s success in the struggle for existence and, although Galton’s views were questioned by other representatives of cognitive psychology both during his time and later, the argument about the connection between the success of human activity and human mental abilities probably requires no special justification, regardless of whether this applies to a factor theory, a genetic theory or any other theory referring to the notion of intelligence as well as its development and application.³

Intelligence was initially attributed only to man, whereas, over time, it also started to be referred to animals⁴ and even plants⁵, which also prompted the use of the concept of intelligence to things, since, after the study of collective intelligence of a group of people started in sociology in the 1980s⁶, reference was

² Jerzy Korczak, ‘Biurokratyczny model organizacji’ in Agnieszka Chrisidu-Budnik and others (eds), *Nauka organizacji i zarządzania* (Kolonia Limited 2005) 357–368

³ Jan Strelau, *Inteligencja człowieka* (Wydawnictwo Żak 1997)

⁴ Jeremy Narby, *Intelligence in Nature* (Penguin 2005)

⁵ Anthony Trewavas, ‘Plant intelligence’ (2005) 92 (9) *Naturwissenschaften*

⁶ Pierre Lévy, *L’Intelligence Collective. Pour une Anthropologie du Cyberspace* (La Découverte 1994)

made to the behaviour of bacteria and ants.⁷ It is hardly surprising that, when smart things started to appear, such as watches (smartwatches initially only appeared as gadgets in comic books, cartoons and action movies, but Hamilton Pulsar P2 started mass production in 1972; the smartwatch currently performs the functions which the designer develops), cars (the Smart car produced by Daimler Benz in 1997, initiated in 1972 by Nicolas Hayeck, founder of the watchmaking company, Swatch, conceived as a car for moving around large cities smartly, because of its size), televisions (smart TV) and finally telephones (smartphones), while almost every day brings new smart-gadgets that make life easier by solving a series of everyday problems for the user. So, a smart home appeared (for the first time as a Push-Button Manor project implemented in the USA in Jackson in 1950), followed by a smart city, namely, in accordance with the definition of the Committee of Digital and Knowledge-based Cities, “[...] a city that uses information and communication technologies (ICTs) and other means to improve the interactivity and efficiency of urban infrastructure and its constituent components, as well as raising the awareness of the inhabitants”⁸ (Eurocities currently brings together 100 European cities that aspire to this title). Increasingly, there is talk about artificial intelligence, which is supposed to replace people not only through mechanization and instrumentalization, as well as even automation and robotics, but in decision-making, for which human intelligence is usually necessary.⁹

Hence, only a step to refer intelligence to organized human activities, because a smart man should naturally create smart organizations. Initially, however, ergological sciences emphasized the economic efficiency of organizing human work and, even if they turned to its psychological aspects in the behavioural school, the intention was rather to shape human behaviour. It was only the new economy at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries that drew attention to factors other than the technology of production growth, which, in the endogenous model of growth proposed by Paul Romer, was described as the capital of knowledge for the first time.¹⁰ This was followed by the notion of a knowledge-based economy, intellectual capital, followed by a learning organization, or, in other

⁷ Tadeusz Szuba and others, ‘On Efficiency of Collective Intelligence Phenomena’ in Nguyen Ngoc Thanh (ed), *Transactions on Computational Collective Intelligence III* (Springer 2011)

⁸ Andrea Caragaliu and Chiara Del Bo, ‘Smartness and European Urban Performance. Assessing the Local Impacts of Smart Urban Attributes’ (2012) 25 *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*

⁹ Marcin Wyskowski, ‘Metody sztucznej inteligencji w organizacji inteligentnej’ (2015) 86 *Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Śląskiej. Organizacja i Zarządzanie*

¹⁰ Paul Romer, ‘Endogenous Technological Change’ (1990) 98 (5) *Journal of Political Economy*

words, a smart organization¹¹, if the manifestation of intelligence of a human is his ability to learn. A smart organization is based on the sum of the knowledge of its participants, but it not only uses it as other resources, but also creates conditions for its continuous enrichment and development, in order to further, uninterruptedly use it ever more extensively in the future. The feature of a smart organization is leaving greater freedom of action to its members arising from the trust that the organization bestows on them. This encourages them to demonstrate greater activity and creativity, which enables a smart organization to face future changes instead of being surprised and paralyzed by them. This arises from the natural ability of an intelligent human to anticipate future states of affairs.

Competition between organizations, especially business organizations, naturally makes the phenomenon of a smart organization spread, together with the globalization processes, on the principle that “less smart organizations” lose to “smarter organizations”. According to Richard Florida, this supports the concentration of smarter organizations in certain places, which not only compete, but also cooperate with each other, which attracts a specific category of people with an appropriately high level of intelligence leading to the creation of a so-called “creative class”, while the area itself is transformed into a “learning region”.¹²

In an increasingly smarter world, where increasingly more areas of social life are encompassed by “smart solutions”, public administration cannot remain on the outside or in opposition to this process. It should be noted, however, that public administration is only one type of organization, so the application of the concept of smart organization to the organization should have appropriate reference to public administration, as other concepts, which arose on the basis of ergological sciences, had such references. Consequently, the question is arising increasingly frequently in scientific publications on administrative sciences about the possibility of applying smart organization solutions to administration.¹³ For Jolanta Szaban, the state of Polish public administration prevents it from being considered smart because it fails to satisfy the four primary features of smart organizations formulated by Arie de Geus: fiscal conservatism manifested in relying on resources without the need to borrow capital (Szaban believes that administration offices cannot properly manage their resources), adaptability to conditions of operation such as time and place (Szaban cites examples of bad layouts of office space and the failure to adjust opening hours to the needs of the

¹¹ Bogusz Miłkiewicz and Bernard Ziębicki, ‘Organizacja inteligentna a organizacja ucząca się’ (2000) 5 Przegląd Organizacji

¹² Richard Florida, ‘Toward the Learning Region’ (1995) 27 (5) Futures

¹³ Stefan Helm and Uwe Schmidt, “Smart Administration” – Mit Fünf Fragen Zur Intelligenten Verwaltung’ (2014) 1 Fokus Mittelland Newsletter

people), social involvement (according to Szaban, universal bureaucratization denies identification with the role of administration of serving people among its employees) and tolerance, which the author considers is missing. Even so, he proposes his own definition of smart administration as one “which combines a high degree of information technology saturation with the knowledge and involvement of the people working in it, taking into account its role of serving the public”.¹⁴ However, Jan Boć made an attempt to formulate a far broader definition of smart administration, as that “which, in line with the principles of logic, rational criteria and requirements of legitimacy, without additional organizational efforts, financial outlay and people, acting in accordance with the law, is able to enrich its creations and functioning which lie at its foundations, and simultaneously is better able to settle an individual case or a series of individual cases, or to avoid losses, which, in given conditions, a less smart administration would undoubtedly incur, or the addressee of its actions would incur”.¹⁵

Jan Boć’s definition draws attention to reiterating the principle of the administration being bound by the law, which means that, in the considerations regarding smart administration contained in this collective monograph, the legal norm constituting the basis of the operation of authorities and organizational units of public administration will define their appropriateness, the content of the task, the form of its implementation, and its procedure, while undertaking activities characterized as smart must be conducted in accordance with the content of such norms. Just as Jan Boć, we believe that such actions may support the implementation of the norm, improve the quality of performance and enhance efficiency; but they are never an alternative to actions taken on the basis and within the limits of the law. It would be appropriate to reiterate the concept of Franciszek Longchamps, co-founder of the Wrocław school of administration, who, in conducting an overview study of administration, distinguished the factors defining the administrative system (he understood it as a division of labour, which can be understood as the system of administration and simultaneously division of its tasks, encompassing cultural activities in a public position, namely tasks that are: necessary (contained in the norms defining the system and the action of administration arising from external and objective sources with respect to administration), obligatory (contained in the legal norms created by the administration itself, but also in ethical norms and moral principles as social objectives) and optional tasks (leaving the person operating in the public position a certain amount of discretion, the assessment of the expediency of his activities). Longchamps noted that “There is commonly talk of administration that is wise,

¹⁴ Jolanta Szaban, ‘Czy polska administracja może być “inteligentna”?’ (2004) 2 Zarządzanie Zasobami Ludzkimi

¹⁵ Jan Boć, ‘Administracja publiczna jako organizacja inteligentna’ in Jan Boć (ed), *Administracja Publiczna* (Kolonia Limited 2003) 361

cunning or flexible or which is stupid, infirm, disjointed, corrupt....”, which applies to the assessment of the whole system or its individual parts.¹⁶ Similarly, factors need to be chosen that specify that the system and its components gain a positive assessment as a result – in this case, the assessment of administration as being smart.

It would seem that smart administration will not be the subject of necessary factors; after all, it is difficult to imagine a constitutional, material or procedural regulation, the provision of which specifies a smart structure, sets a smart objective, or orders smart action. However, if account is taken of the regulations on employment in official positions in the civil service, in offices of state administration or in working for self-government employers, people who satisfy the qualification requirements set by the level and sometimes also the subject of qualifications, professional experience and specific skills, it can be accepted that the objective is to build the right knowledge capital in the given administrative office, whereas if these regulations force the employees of the administrative offices to improve their qualifications and develop professionally, being subject to periodic qualification appraisals, this is a classic example of a smart organization described by Romer and Florida. Almost certainly, the obligatory factor can serve the preferences of smart action among the less intelligent or completely unintelligent, if only by the application of systems of responsibility and rewarding for the results of work applied in a given administrative office or organizational unit, the ethical codes and others that are introduced, which influence the conduct of officials and employees. Undoubtedly, all the conveniences for the smart conduct of their addressees should become the domain of optional factors, because an intelligent official or employee can easily determine on his own how to better organize his work at his work post in order to improve his efficiency.

Smart administration predicts, as Jan Boć wrote, so it does not take hasty action, while setting the objective of acting in accordance with a legal norm does not release its performer from thinking independently. Smart administration features a high administrative culture and is not just about a kind of administrative savoir vivre, although it is obvious that an intelligent official has personal culture and appropriately relates to other people, including settling their matters at his office, but rather about the organization of the whole office and its individual positions in a manner which is friendly to the people administered.¹⁷ Smart

¹⁶ Franciszek Longchamps, *Założenia nauki administracji* (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego 1991) 104, 121–126

¹⁷ Jerzy Korczak, ‘Przyjazny urząd jako nowa dyrektywa kultury administrowania. Refleksje nad jakością obsługi interesantów w instytucjach administracji publicznej’ in Jerzy Korczak (ed), *Cywilizacja Administracji Publicznej. Księga Jubileuszowa z Okazji 80-lecia Urodzin Prof. Nadzw. UW dr hab. Jana Jeżewskiego* (e-Wydawnictwo. Prawnicza i Ekonomiczna Biblioteka Cyfrowa 2018)

administration is responsible for activities taken not only in the political and legal dimension, but primarily in the social dimension, therefore assuring certainty and predictability of these activities, thereby increasing the capital of social trust.¹⁸

It is precisely for these reasons that the employees and PhD students of the Section of the Public Administration System at the Institute of Administrative Sciences of the Faculty of Law, Administration and Economics at the University of Wrocław have decided to devote another collective publication to the matter of smart administration, as it constitutes part of the Section's research field – “Social responsibility of public administration” – initiated in the 2017/18 academic year. Social responsibility of public administration is a concept of bodies and organizational units of public administration doing business, the basis of which is the obligation to choose such decisions and actions that contribute not only to the fulfilment of the statutory obligation to perform tasks, but also the social well-being. Other than satisfying the statutory requirements, the bodies and managers of organizational units, voluntarily accept social, ethical and ecological obligations.

The articles comprising this volume present a wealth of topics related to the issue contained within the title of smart administration, as each of the authors has chosen a different area of administrative activity. If a provocative and simultaneously fundamental question arises as to whether the public administration can be smart, then for the authors, the smartness of administration is even a state of affairs, the result of the analysis of its operation (Małgorzata Giełda). As pointed out, the considerations are thematically varied, as they are both classic issues in the area of the performance of tasks, such as education (Renata Raszewska-Skałeczka) and solving the problem of homelessness (Dominika Cendrowicz), as well as one of the conditions for the emergence of smart administration, or its computerization (Karina Pilarz), and finally a multi-faceted look at the functioning of smart cities (Agnieszka Chrisidu-Budnik and Justyna Przedańska). The volume contains two articles related to the cooperation of territorial self-government units suggested by Jan Boć (Jerzy Korczak, Renata Kusiak-Winter) as a factor supporting the equalization of the opportunities of these individuals to gaining or increasing their level of smart organization and operation.

¹⁸ Agnieszka Chrisidu-Budnik and Jerzy Korczak, ‘The Role of Trust in Spatial Planning Process. The Case of Poland’ in Barbara Kozuch and others (eds), *Managing Public Trust* (Palgrave Macmillan 2018)

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