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Top 20

VISIONARIES

of Media & Tech Industries Shared Their Ideas on

Digital opportunities 2020

GOVERNMENT GOES DIGITAL

KUNO SCHEDLER

EDITOR'S NOTE



Dear readers,

Sometimes I read keynotes and think: nothing to add!
That describes my initial thought when I read the article that guest author Kuno Schedler sent us for our current magazine issue.

For almost 30 years, Schedler has been working on the digital transformation of administration, the use of information technology in administration and, of course, the topic of e-government.

A challenging and still ongoing task, and yet every line of his contribution echoes the 'purpose' and passion for his work spectrum: creating new structures, for and with the people.

Yours,

Nele Dagefoerde
COO Adello



GOVERNMENT GOES DIGITAL

WRTITTEN BY PROF. KUNO SCHEDLER

E-government and its newer form, smart government, is part of a larger industry: administrations are reforming themselves, buying IT solutions from companies, seeking advice, having their own communications, mobilising their citizens and finding private companies to finance public services. All this requires a new way of thinking in the administration, but also in the private sector. Leadership is required. Without leadership, the dynamic activities will not be able to find any stability. Sustainability is not only an ecological but also an organizational concern.

It is not that the administration is only now discovering information technology. In the early nineties, when I wrote my dissertation, IT was already cold coffee.

So when people talked about "e-government" in the dawning new millennium, they were not so much talking about a new technology as they were talking about a new way of accessing the services of the administration.

The website solutions allowed "single window access": instead of analogous physical visits to the office, services could now be offered around the clock via the website of the municipality. Or better: ... could have been offered.

The implementation was infinitely more difficult than developing visionary concepts.

Today, in the age of data, the focus of science and consulting is shifting to "smart government" - the next generation of spaceship digitization, so to speak. Here too, implementation will be a challenge. It will be all the more successful the more the administration is able to cooperate with the private sector. To do this, however, it must first change its own capabilities.

Where e-government takes place, communities of practice often form within public administration, which are characterised by common ideas, procedures and often also a common language.

The e-government community of public administration can be simplified by categorising it into three types of "champions": Entrepreneurs, intrapreneurs and leaders.

DRIVING FORCE OF TRANSFORMATION

Entrepreneurs' activities are primarily directed against the outside world, for example by seeking to position their city particularly strongly in the competition for a high profile. Some cities in Switzerland have created "Chief Digital Officers" who have precisely this mission: To drive forward development in the city and make the city known as a modern, digitalized administration.

In St. Gallen, a pop-up store was created for this purpose in a three-month "Smarthalle" project - in the city's pedestrian zone - in order to make the Smart City idea accessible to the inhabitants as closely as possible.

As much recognition the project received in the e-government community in Switzerland, it was just as challenging for "normal" administration and politics. Improvisation came before planning, and uncertainty before the security of everyday life. Entrepreneurship, that is, and the requirement for lived agility. That was not easy.

Intrapreneurs are employees who develop and implement new ideas on their own initiative (and often against the usual processes and structures of the administration). They work primarily within the administration and want to implement improvements.

Intrapreneurs often pursue ideas that they have got to know in a similar form elsewhere. They believe in the power of the solution they are aiming for.

In Switzerland, the "Civil Challenge" project, among others, is pursuing the idea of encouraging intrapreneurs in the administration to develop innovative approaches.

Participants in workshops first describe their greatest annoyances, and then immediately develop creative solutions to remedy the particular annoyance and record them on special maps. This should create a momentum of its own from which real reforms in public administration can grow. At the same time, the best ideas are selected to be developed in further sessions to the point where they can be implemented. The project runs until the end of 2020, and we are eagerly awaiting the results.



While entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs are still seeking change, they need to be orchestrated to have a positive impact on the city. Good solutions should be consolidated in the administrative organisation so that they can have a lasting effect.

This orchestration and the mobilization of resources that lead to consolidation is part of leadership in the context of e-government and smart government. St. Gallen's mayor Thomas Scheitlin, for example, has set himself the task of consistently driving forward digitization in his city. He has created the position of a Chief Digital Officer, made the necessary resources available through political decisions and initiated the institutional foundations for sustainable implementation.

Leadership has a lot to do with knowledge about the organization and how it works. It does not always have to be based in the political executive. But when it does, it makes the task easier for all concerned.



HARMONIZING DIGITAL DRIVERS

The better these three types work together, the greater the prospect of success. However, many digitisation projects of the state do not only take place in the administration alone. They often create ecosystems in which state and private actors engage in an intensive exchange, contributing their respective strengths.

In an ecosystem, each actor benefits from the others and at the same time contributes to the whole. E-government ecosystems are characterized by the cooperation of IT companies, regulators, administrations, citizens and politicians, who together drive digitization forward.

Technology, law, financing and administrative organisation must be brought into harmony so that sustainable solutions can be implemented effectively. This cooperation is "multirational": each individual perspective has its own rationality, i.e. its own way of interpreting things. Nevertheless, the different communities in the ecosystems must pull themselves together and achieve joint success.

What still fascinates me after almost thirty years of research in public management are the social and political processes that make smart government possible. It is the people with their needs, knowledge and ideals who live change and thus create new structures. The prospect of public and private actors working together even more intensively and creatively in a smart administration arouses curiosity. Social innovations and an administration that is "intuitive to use" are thus created.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Kuno Schedler has been a professor of public management since 1996. He is an expert in public sector reforms, public sector accounting, corporate governance of state-owned enterprises, and digital government. His current research focuses on managing pluralism in organizations and ecosystems.



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