

# Preface

The concept of the “business civil society” outlined in this volume, an outgrowth of the traditional civil society, itself an old, yet misunderstood and underutilized concept, is an attempt to provide a neutral, voluntary, and contingent space where public politicians, administrators, theoreticians, et al., can meet and dialogue with their counterparts from the private sector. The nations of Europe, including Romania, have different civil traditions varying in their intensity, cultural heritage, scope of activity, religious or nonreligious affiliation, etc., to the point that the civil society means different things for different people. Western Europe has experienced over a century of modern government involvement crowding out the efforts of traditional civil society; while Romania, along with the other Eastern nations of the former Soviet bloc, experienced almost a half-century of systematic efforts by communist regimes to eradicate and control all spheres of voluntary, nongovernmental civil life. To make matters worse, the inexperience and immaturity of Romanian society in the early transition period after communism, particularly its so-called *entrepreneurial class*, have discredited and abused the concept of civil society, utilizing it solely for tax benefits and selfish purposes. Nevertheless, I hope my work will provide a humble impetus to both business and public administrators in both Romania and the European Union to consider this complementary alternative to future public administration reforms. I believe that our historical global context expects fresh and innovative ideological paradigms from both the public and the private sector.

In 2010, while writing on my dissertation, I outlined three historical realities that comprise the era of globalization and why both business and public administration communities ought to change their adversarial paradigms and find common solutions instead of finding flaws with the other: (1) rapid technological transformation, (2) the interconnectivity of the capital markets, and (3) competition from developing nations with massive populations such as China and India. Since then, I must add two other realities that have taken place and will probably have substantial historical implications for Romania and the European Union: (4) the “Arab Spring” political revolutions potentially causing vast population migration toward the European Union and placing an immense strain on the public treasury with possible social unrest and native retaliation, and (5) the possible collapse of the Euro and/or

the loss of national sovereignty. I hope these, along with other historical and global realities, will provide sufficient motivation for Romanian and European public administrators and business owners to search for solutions that are “*out of the box*” of traditional thinking and finger-pointing.

The business civil society is built on the traditional, value-based concepts of early Western European nations, yet it takes into account the realities and pressures of globalization. In these challenging times, practitioners and theoreticians alike from multiple disciplines and various nations owe it to their societies to engage in honest and professional dialogue and explore nonlinear and nontraditional solutions. I trust the current volume will be a small contribution to the ongoing dialogue among political scientists, public administrators, business leaders, and the civil society.

I state the hypothesis that there are no inherently rich or poor nations; instead there are well-managed, prosperous nations and poorly-managed, impoverished ones. This builds upon Michael Porter’s (1990) and Hernando de Soto’s (2000) claim that governments have an absolute determinant role on the quality of life of their citizens. This has always been true, yet I will argue that in the current era of globalization, international competition has increased, placing unusually high demands on national public administrators not only to perform routine tasks associated with their office, but increasingly to generate prosperity and well-being for their citizens. Globalization, with its three major pillars of technology, international and unrestricted finance, and demography, is changing the governance paradigms we have inherited from the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries with worrisome speed. The traditional passive and reactionary role of public administration is being altered to include proactive and anticipatory measures. The traditional levers of power are also being transformed. Where in the past public administrators reacted primarily to their political masters, in the global era they are increasingly sensitive to faceless financial markets, rating agencies, international media conglomerates, and increasingly technology-enhanced micro-corporations. In these first sections I will broadly outline the global issues facing public administration reformers the world over, along with some of the globalization forces that are dictating a different reform paradigm. Even if this volume focuses mainly on Romania, it behooves us to understand what pressures mold our new world.

This global, macroeconomic reality manifests itself in the perception of Romanian society through the process of Europeanization; therefore, I will succinctly outline the literature on the European Union along with its theoretical underpinnings, history, identity, integration impetus, and administrative/legal structure. For an in-depth analysis on the European Union in the Romanian language, I followed in the footsteps of Iordan Gheorghe Bărbulescu and his school of thought, utilizing his numerous and insightful works on the subject. The European Union is a dynamic and robust political and social construct that is too large for one volume to contain. I am afraid my work will not do it sufficient justice and I would like to apologize in advance; any shortcomings and omissions are entirely my own. In the past few years, any committed and passionate student of the European Union has been witnessing events that are both challenging and exhilarating. The academic

future of European Union studies will be ripe with opportunity for analyses and interpretations and I trust that the experts from both Romania and the rest of the Union will continue to provide us with astute elucidation.

I will then contextualize the discussion of globalization and Europeanization and refer to the nation of Romania, which is the focus of my research. Again, I will not go into all the exhaustive details of the current Romanian public administration with its two decades of reforms, since many significant scholarly works have already been written on this subject. I will mainly focus on the historical legacies and the major legal and political transformations that took place after the fall of the communist regime. Valuable work of my Romanian colleagues has permitted me to also briefly focus on the reforms and alterations affected by European integration along with the instruments utilized in the Europeanization process.<sup>1</sup>

In the opinion of this author, although the Europeanization efforts of both the European Union and the Romanian reformers have been commendable, they have also been both hypocritical and insufficient. Further, I will address what is considered the greatest challenge to Romanian public administration and to Romania's place in the world: corruption and a lack of healthy leadership. Once again, the limitations imposed by the time and the space of my research did not permit me to adequately discuss this subject; therefore, the works of other experts on this subject ought to be explored. My primary research contribution has been a study on Romanian business leadership, who are the target group that my work is attempting to mobilize and engage in the current public administration reform discussion. Given the speed of communication and the interconnectivity of the world, both business and government leaders have a real incentive to reduce corruption and increase transparency. Through various "corporate social responsibility" (CSR) initiatives, the globalization of the NGO sector, and anticorruption priorities for local and national government, there are numerous studies that correlate low levels of corruption with long-term, sustainable prosperity.

Although fully integrated into the European Union and the global community, Romania's reform initiatives on corruption eradication, and, more importantly, economic prosperity, are not over. To complicate matters, the global continuous change and hyper-turbulence identified and outlined previously are even more pronounced in public administration. The European Union, portrayed as a beacon of stability, prosperity, and civilization, seems to be shaking to its core. I will return to the theoretical and ideological instruments of public administration reforms of New Public Management (NPM), Neo-Weberianism, and Digital Government. As valuable instruments for future public administration reforms, they necessitate in-depth understanding and masterful utilization; therefore I will outline their history, their context, and ideological underpinnings. These three tools, especially Digital Government, must be properly utilized by Romanian public administrators and the

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<sup>1</sup>I would like to mention Adrian Miroiu, Iordan Gheorghe Bărbulescu, Mihai Păunescu, Șerban Cerkez, Mirela State-Cerkez, Radu Nicolae, Florin Bondar, Ana-Raluca Alecu, Radu Comșa, Lucian Ciolan, Andrei Trandafira, Bogdan Lazarescu, and Andrei Miroiu, whose research has provided me invaluable information and guidance.

Romanian population at large. Public administrators must strike a right balance so that the benefits of each ideological tool may be maximized, while its negatives neutralized. However, based upon historical observation and world-wide research, neither New Public Management, nor Neo-/Traditional Weberianism, nor Digital Government can function without an adequate cultural construct. Unfortunately, most public administration reform initiatives ignore this reality, downplay its importance, or do not think that culture creation and nurturing is their responsibility. This is why I propose the consideration of a fourth reform ideology, Civil Society, which is both complementary and foundational to the above-mentioned three.

Eventually, I will proceed on a transdisciplinary and complementary approach to public administration reform by discussing the concept of a modern Business Civil Society in Romania. I begin with an attempt to explain the concept of traditional civil society, a concept minimized by the advent of the modern state in the late nineteenth century, and sometimes misused in the public discourse. Traditionally, the Civil Society complemented and enhanced public governance, as it was the “third sector” providing a neutral, voluntary interface between government and business. Historically, it held three main responsibilities: (1) generate appropriate national culture, (2) hold government accountable, and (3) supplement the government’s activity, when needed.

The timing of this initiative is most appropriate since the private business sector is recognizing its duty and, through corporate social responsibility (CSR), it is willing to contribute to the improvement in social conditions. Therefore, Romanian and European Union political and administrative leaders ought to take concrete steps in revitalizing this most important and all-benefiting space. Perhaps this can be a long-term public-private partnership of educating the general public as to the benefits of having a healthy, functioning, and objective civil society. The instruments and paradigms that produced the European experiment and modern prosperity are limited in their reach, especially under the pressures of new technological, financial, and demographic realities. It is my argument that both the public and the private sectors have to find innovative methods to complement and aid each other, otherwise both will sink under the weight of their own selfish demands.

## Methodology

This work utilizes a **theoretical approach**, by presenting various theories of public administration, public policy, globalization, governance, Europeanization, government reform, corruption, culture, economic development, civil society, and corporate social responsibility. In most cases I begin with a general, macro perspective and move to particular, locally contextualized realities. I will utilize primary data studies, journal articles published in prestigious journals, and international electronic databases, as well as seminal books published by reputable publishing houses. Invariably, my research will move back and forth over the course of the past century on selective specialty literature published mainly in English and Romanian, giving it also a

**historical perspective.** In 2011, along with a group of young researchers at the Griffiths School of Management, we conducted a survey of 145 top Romanian leaders and institutions on a broad range of topics giving this research a **primary data** dimension. This survey was conducted online using advanced and efficient survey instruments (Qualtrix), obtaining data from top Romanian leaders and their organizations. The results will be presented along with interpretations and explanations.

However, I believe the greatest contribution of my research is its **transdisciplinary nature**. Considering the pressures that global finance and economics are exercising upon public administration, and the fact that budgetary austerity is becoming the new norm for most public treasuries, perhaps nontraditional fields need to be explored for possible solutions. I argue that cultural and religious studies could offer a complementary perspective and reform instruments to the traditional public administration and public policy. My hypothesis is that voluntary cultural and religious initiatives could: (a) reduce the budgetary burden on government budgets, especially in the area of social services; (b) decrease waste and inefficiency of current government structures through objective and transparent accountability, and (c) rekindle a healthy entrepreneurial spirit that will create societal prosperity. The space that should be explored, and in some instances created, is what I refer to as the business civil society, envisioned as a neutral, transdisciplinary, and mutually beneficial space. Public administrators and private businesses alike are the beneficiaries of economically virtuous cultures, and by the same token they are negatively affected by a culture where corruption and inefficiencies are the norm rather than the exception. By bringing a cultural and implicitly a religious perspective into the field of public administration and economics, I hope to enlarge the scope of the current dialogue and render some transdisciplinary alternatives.

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