

**UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST**  
**FACULTY OF ADMINISTRATION AND BUSINESS**  
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**SUMMARY**  
**HABILITATION THESIS**

**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE  
POST-DIGITAL ERA:  
STAKEHOLDER RELATIONAL  
RESILIENCE AND THE CO-  
PRODUCTION OF SERVICES**

**SCIENTIFIC FIELD: Public Administration**

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## **Introduction: The conceptual framework of post-digital public administration**

The thesis proposes a paradigm shift in the analysis of public administration, moving from a strictly technological view of digitalisation toward a phase of re-humanising the digital. While digitalisation has emphasised automation and efficiency, the subsequent stage places the emphasis on meaning, inclusion, and social resilience. It redefines professional competencies—from technical skills to meta-digital competencies (critical thinking, algorithmic ethics, human–AI collaboration)—and introduces a new paradigm of lifelong learning and adaptability. Thus, post-digitalisation marks the beginning of a new cognitive revolution, in which technology becomes a medium of knowledge and humanisation, rather than merely an instrument of control. Institutional performance is no longer assessed solely through technical indicators, but through the capacity to sustain trust and to co-produce services in a society shaped by crises and mobility.

The author grounds the thesis on three core pillars:

1. Relational resilience: the institutional capacity to strengthen networks of cooperation under conditions of stress.
2. Evidence- and network-based governance: anchoring decision-making in empirical evidence and inter-organisational collaboration.
3. Co-production of public services: the active involvement of citizens and other stakeholders in the design and delivery of services.

## **Chapter 1: Methods, methodologies, and software in the analysis of social and economic phenomena**

This chapter details the methodological toolkit employed in the research underpinning the thesis, with a strong emphasis on transparency and reproducibility.

### 1.1. Quantitative approaches: opinion surveys

Opinion surveys are used as the primary method to obtain representative data from large-scale samples (national or transnational). They enable the quantification of perceptions (for example, patient satisfaction or the frequency of AI use) and the identification of opinion gaps among different stakeholder groups, thereby providing a solid foundation for evidence-based public policies.

### 1.2. Qualitative approaches: interviews, focus groups, and case studies

Qualitative methods are essential for exploring the deeper motivations and affective states of social actors, such as migrants. Case studies, including the one on entrepreneurship within a Finnish public institution, provide a multifaceted understanding of phenomena as they unfold in real-world contexts.

### 1.3. Statistical modelling: PLS-PM and software tools

For the analysis of complex phenomena, structural equation modelling using Partial Least Squares Path Modelling (PLS-PM) was employed, a method well suited to models involving latent variables and small

sample sizes. This approach enabled the investigation of mediation effects (for example, how trust mediates patient satisfaction). In addition, cluster analysis was applied to group administrative units according to the incidence of nosocomial infections or to analyse the impact of telework.

## **Chapter 2: Public administration and service governance in the post-digital era**

This chapter analyses the interface between institutional performance and citizen experience, highlighting the conditions that sustain public trust.

### **2.1. Quality assessment in healthcare and hospital governance**

Research on the Romanian healthcare system shows that patient satisfaction is driven primarily by relational factors (perceived attention, communication, and waiting time), rather than by formal signals such as accreditation. Hospital accreditation functions mainly as an internal management tool, with limited visibility among patients. A critical indicator of quality is the management of nosocomial infections, where spatial analyses reveal regional heterogeneities associated with infrastructure and levels of urbanisation.

### **2.2 Digitalisation and innovation: the case of telemedicine**

The transition to telemedicine in Romania was accelerated by the pandemic; however, its adoption by physicians depends on perceived usefulness, ease of use, and access to electronic medical records. The need for financial incentives and continuous education to overcome “computer anxiety” is emphasised.

### **2.3 The impact of telework on well-being and productivity**

Telework is presented as a “double-edged sword”: it offers flexibility and an improved work–life balance, but may also generate social isolation and digital exhaustion. Cluster analysis indicates that organisational and technological support are crucial for maintaining employee productivity, including in the public sector.

### **2.4 Entrepreneurship within public institutions**

The case study based on the Finnish administrative model demonstrates that public institutions can adopt an entrepreneurial mindset, acting as facilitators of regional development. This approach entails close collaboration among public authorities, universities, and firms through business incubators and participatory governance.

## **Chapter 3: Stakeholders and relational dynamics in post-communist society**

This chapter explores how communist legacy and emerging democratic norms intertwine in shaping relationships among social actors.

### **3.1 Labour migration and transnational relations**

Romanian migration is analyzed as a multifactorial process. The decision to migrate is influenced not only by economic factors, but also by aspirations for professional development or family reunification. A major finding of the qualitative research is the identification of “governmental absenteeism”: the lack of

institutional support has compelled migrants to rely almost exclusively on informal networks (family, friends, church). Migrants in Spain and Italy maintain strong ties with their country of origin, expressing an acute need for Romanian cultural services.

### **3.2 The Role of recruitment agencies**

Comparative analysis between Romania and Bulgaria shows that public agencies (EURES) focus on neutral mediation and legal compliance, whereas private agencies are far more proactive, offering “psychological support” and rapidly adapting to employers’ requirements, sometimes operating in regulatory grey areas.

### **3.3 Job satisfaction and the “preference for the status quo”**

In Romania’s gas sector, job satisfaction has been shown to mediate the relationship between organisational structure and employee commitment. A post-communist specific feature is the preference for stability (the status quo), which, somewhat unexpectedly, exerts a positive effect on employee loyalty, reflecting a historically inherited need for security.

### **3.4 Corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the retail sector**

There are significant disparities between small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and multinational corporations (MNCs) in the implementation of CSR. MNCs adopt a strategic approach, targeting environmental and community objectives, while SMEs focus primarily on employee well-being, being constrained by limited resources and high costs.

### **3.5 The ukrainian refugee crisis**

Research conducted in 2022 highlights an exemplary mobilization of Romanian civil society, which acted more rapidly than state authorities. Although Romanians believe that the state and the European Union should bear primary responsibility, trust in the self-organising capacity of civic networks increased significantly during the crisis.

## **Chapter 4: Relational and aystemic resilience and the co-production of services**

This theoretical and applied chapter defines resilience as an emergent property of systems and relationships.

### **4.1 Dimensions of systemic resilience**

Resilience does not refer solely to technical robustness, but also encompasses anticipatory, absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacities. These capacities are strengthened by relational resilience—the quality of linkages between public administration, markets, and communities. Co-production acts as the vector that transforms uncertainty into collective action.

### **4.2 Building social capital through cultural institutions**

The author argues that cultural institutions, particularly metropolitan libraries, should evolve into multifunctional hubs for migrants. Beyond providing access to books, they should offer language courses,

support for children, and spaces for social interaction, functioning as “cultural embassies” that help reduce feelings of alienation. The church is also recognised as a major agent in strengthening social capital within the diaspora.

#### **4.3 Non-formal education and youth values (2016–2024)**

The longitudinal study documents an alarming shift in values: both young people and teachers have moved from valuing the “visionary/innovator” model to favouring that of the “competent executor.” Moreover, although parents support group activities, students increasingly prefer individual activities—a trend reinforced by the digital environment. The use of AI (e.g., ChatGPT) is predominantly academic, yet it is negatively correlated with engagement in entrepreneurial programs.

#### **4.4 Regional development policies and social entrepreneurship**

For rural areas, the model of social entrepreneurship (e.g., the valorisation of wild berries) is proposed as a tool for social inclusion. The success of such initiatives depends on reducing bureaucracy and providing accessible consultancy services, an area currently characterized by an “institutional gap.”

#### **4.5 Education and the labour market**

Aligning university curricula with employers’ requirements entails the development of transversal competencies (critical thinking, communication, ethics). Curriculum “co-design” with employers is recommended, alongside the integration of non-formal education methods into formal education.

#### **4.6 Promoting ecological behavior**

In Bucharest, a discrepancy exists between citizens’ expectations regarding state involvement and the reality of isolated NGO-led initiatives. The absence of systemic policies relegates ecology to a marginal issue, highlighting the need for a strategic vision that actively involves mass media and public–private partnerships.

### **General conclusions and future research directions**

The thesis synthesises a body of research conducted over several years, demonstrating that in the post-digital era, administrative performance is inextricably linked to social architecture.

#### **Main conclusions:**

- Post-digital legitimacy is grounded in the design of interactions and in trust, rather than solely in technical standards.
- Polycentric governance (state–citizens–NGOs) represents the only viable path towards genuine resilience in the face of crises.
- The post-communist legacy (institutional distrust and a preference for the status quo) must be managed through transparency and through the “translation” of quality signals into forms that are meaningful for citizens.

**Future research agenda:** The author intends to pursue interdisciplinary research in collaboration with doctoral students, focusing on:

1. Assessing the real impact of co-production in healthcare and education.
2. Examining the balance between vision and execution in the training of public servants.
3. Knowledge governance and the transformation of formal signals into tangible benefits for citizens.
4. Developing best-practice caravans (“From Every Place”) to connect experts, public authorities, and citizens within resilient communities.

Through this approach, the author proposes a model of public administration that is not merely digitalized, but re-humanized—capable of actively collaborating with all stakeholders to generate sustainable public value.