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Where and how you sit: How civil servants view citizens' participation

Abstract

Citizen's participation is disputed; some see it as enhancing democracy while others see it as undermining representative government. Some find it increases administrative efficiency, others it creates additional costs. Studies argue that the outcome depends on the value which civil servants place on inclusion. Echoing Miles' law, "where you stand depends on where you sit," we discuss how administrative structures and processes—"how you sit"—shape civil servants values on citizens' participation. Using survey data from over 1700 civil servants in the Baltic countries, the article contributes by placing the discussion in the context of extreme social change.

Keywords: citizens' participation, public administration, post-communist Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania

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Citizens' participation is a sensitive issue. Thomas (2013) asks how citizens are to be viewed by civil servants – as citizens, customers or partners and answers that 'it depends'. The question and its answer mirror the debate about whether public administrations should be seen as *steering* or *servicing*, and if comprehended as *government* or a new mode of *governance* (Stenberg, 1972; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000; Cook, 2007; Bevir, 2010: 97; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, p. 21–23). In any case and as argued by Olson (2008, p. 27-28) public administrations tend not to come as monoliths but as heterogeneous structures reflecting different organizational cultures as well as the tasks they are set to solve.

In practical terms, Peters & Pierre (2000, p. 11) see participation as a degree of involvement ranging from, for example, participation in hearings to parent councils in schools. More generally Callahan (2007a) synthesizes participation through its power relation. At one end of the scale citizens are on the receiving end, i.e. information about decisions; at the other end citizens take control, i.e. the administration has to comply with citizens' decisions. Others look deeper into how participation is formed in concrete policy areas like road planning and management (Neshkova & Guo 2011) or budget processes (Ebdon 2002).

The debate covers normative issues as well as discussions of administrative efficiency. Thus inclusion and citizens' participation are seen to enhance democracy, civic engagement and better policy decisions that reflect community-based legitimate solutions (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Kathi & Cooper, 2005). Accordingly, the involvement of citizens in the governing process is recommended by international organizations (OECD, 2001) and in the EU White Paper on governance (EU Commission, 2001). The virtue of citizens' participation remains contested, however. Peters and Pierre (2000) point out that citizens' participation may undermine representative government and conflict with principles of accountability and formal procedural legitimacy. The administrative efficiency of participation is also questioned because it is time consuming and costly (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004, p. 58). The pros and cons

of citizen participation depend, however, on the issue at stake. Including citizen in routine administrative functions is more time consuming and costly, whereas decisions concerning 'wicked' problems without optimal solutions may be improved by participation (Yang & Callahan, 2007). In any case for citizens' participation to have a positive effect civil servants must be sincere about it and include citizens in order to achieve better and more efficient decisions and not merely as lip service to a principle or as manipulation (King et al., 1998, p. 321, Irvin & Stansbury, 2004, p. 59; Marlowe & Portillo, 2006, p.180; Callahan, 2007b, p. 951). This is in line with Bryer's (2009, p. 277) proposition for a future research question: "What's in it for administrators?" we argue that civil servants' positive view on citizens' participation adheres to how they experience the administrative structures and processes within which they work. The study leans on a broader theory of human behaviour where administrative structures and processes shape informal values and norms (March & Olsen, 1989; Ostrom, 2010, p. 160) and conform to Yang & Panday's (2011, p. 887) findings that organizational characteristics are important for participation outcomes. Thus, adding "how you sit" to "where you sit" (Miles' Law on the organizational environment, 1978, p. 400-401) is expected to affect individual attitudes on "where you stand".

At this point two terminological clarifications are in place. First, we use citizens' participation as an empirical term for extent and form of participation and not *citizen participation* which carries normative implications. Second, we use the term 'civil servant' in its broader sense emphasizing the duties as public employees and not particular terms in a job contract.

The three Baltic countries provide an almost ideal laboratory for social research. The breakdown of the Soviet regime caused massive deinstitutionalization in which ideas and principles for rebuilding public administration crossed swords with pre-Soviet administrative practices, the legacy of Soviet administration, and recommendations from international actors

(among others Nunberg, 2000; Olsen, 2009, p. 10-11; Zubek & Goetz, 2010). The outcome of reform and reconstruction are not uniform, however, and structures and processes differ not only between but also within countries (Demmke & Moilanen, 2010, p. 9; Painter & Peters, 2010). The extreme reorganization of public administration and variation in outcomes is the context of this study of civil servants' values and their relation to organizational structures and practices.

Using data from a survey conducted by the authors among civil servants in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in April 2011, the article makes three contributions. First, it adds to the administration-participation debate by examining problems and potentials for citizens' participation in a post-Soviet governance structure. Second, it demonstrates that the civil servants' belief that increased citizens' participation is positive for the development of the department is partly explained by their experiences with involving private partners (NGOs and firms) in the implementation of public policy and partly by administrative practices and characteristics. Third, juxtaposing values and self-experienced administrative practices in three countries, and among national and sub-national civil servants, allows us to bridge the gap between scholars who study administrative reform in the Baltic states from either a state-centric (for example Nakrošis, 2001; Sarapuu, 2012; Palidauskaite et al., 2010) or a local (Vanags & Vilka, 2006; Ruus, 2011; King et al., 2004) point of view.

The article is organized as follows: The first part reviews the literature and discusses the pros and cons of citizens' participation, the theoretically expected correspondence between organizational principles and participatory values, and the context of a Soviet socio-economic and administrative legacy. The second part develops the method, the choice of countries and describes the data. The third part gives an overview over the formal structure of public administration and the informal structure seen from the perspective of the civil servants. The fourth part analyses the relationship between organizational structures and civil servants'

belief that citizens' participation can make a positive change in their organization. The concluding part discusses the finding that while the different organizational principles have bearings on the perceptions of the value of participation it is equally important to stress that the strength of these relationships depends on the specific context.

From where we stand

The value of citizens' participation in public administration is considered from three perspectives: a normative perspective reflecting the pros and cons of participation, an institutional perspective focusing on how administrative structures and practices correspond with civil servants values of participation, and a cultural perspective focussing on the countries' Soviet legacy.

The pros and cons of citizens' participation

Inclusion of citizens, associations and civil society in public administration decision making and implementation follows three trains of reasoning. First, it echoes normative theories of democratic deliberation as essential for the government to be responsive to the needs of its citizens and as a means to create more responsible and engaged citizens (Barber, 1983; Habermas, 1996; Dahl, 1989). Second, following Locke, Montesquieu, Hume, Smith and Kant, Elinor and Vincent Ostrom formulate a general principle of the architecture of authority that "power should be used to check power" (Ostrom & Ostrom, 2011, p. 115). This implies that including citizens in the administration could work as a control mechanism. In the context of fighting corruption and malpractice in public administration, Susan Rose-Ackerman (2007) adds that inclusion enhance public administrators' integrity. Finally, from an instrumental point of view, citizens' participation is seen as a means to promote efficiency and maintain stability (Kathi & Cooper, 2005, p. 559). In this perspective, inclusion of

different interests moves the civil service away from reliance on technical and expertise models of administration and is expected to create decisions that are more enlightened and increase legitimacy, thus avoiding complaints and obstructions once decisions have been made (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004, p. 56–57).

These perspectives focus on inclusion of citizens in their capacity as “citoyen”, corresponding to Callahan’s (2007a) educated, engaged individual driven by civic virtues and expected to act beyond narrow self-interests. With respect to collective citizen actors, neo-corporatism argues that inclusion of interest organizations in policy formulation increases the legitimacy as political decisions involve the target groups (Rothstein, 2012, p. 414–416). In general, these ideas portray participation, direct or indirect through interest groups, as a legitimizing tool and a form of democracy that should be valued in its own right.

The expected virtues of citizens’ participation are met with reservations. Including citizens in administrative decision making and implementation may erode the very principles of representative democracy (Kathi & Cooper, 2005, p. 560). Moreover, including citizens increases the risk that the regulated “capture” regulations and the regulators, thereby opening a Pandora’s Box of particularism and inequality. Thus, what at face value appears to be democratic deepening may turn into the opposite when government becomes particularistic and captured (Peters & Pierre, 2000, p. 14). Turning to efficiency arguments, the virtue of inclusion is also debatable. Inclusion increases spending, not because of particularism and capture, but because of costs related to coordination between organizations and governmental levels.

In a US context, inclusion of citizens has a long history and required by law (Rose-Ackerman 2008, p. 603). Empirical studies on inclusion in the American context confirm both pros and cons. According to Yang & Panday (2011, p. 885), 67 percent of the city managers in their study agreed that participation brought ideas, and 26 percent stressed that participation

caused excessive delays. Bryer (2009) argues that the outcome of citizens' collaboration highly depends on both administrator and citizen role perception. Consequently, Thomas (2013) argues that the expected effects of including citizens strongly align with the perception of the citizen-public administration relation. Especially if citizen inclusion is based on citizens as "citoyens" civil servants' attitude toward inclusion becomes paramount because civil servants become facilitators and partners rather than experts and entrepreneurs (King et al., 1998; Marlowe & Portillo, 2006, p. 180; Callahan, 2007a, p. 1187).

Citizens' participation in the Baltic countries is not tradition, common nor required by law. This gives the study some limitations. However, citizens' participation is not unknown and we hold Baltic civil servants' view up against their self-experienced organizational context. We now turn to the expected relation between administrative context and views on citizens' participation.

The institutional context of citizens' participation

The institutional perspective focuses on public administration structures that refer to the territorial division and on processes that refer to the internal hierarchy, recruitment, monitoring and external relations (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, p. 2).

Our data captures administrative structures indirectly through the respondents' attachment to either state or sub-national administrative levels and through their position in the organization having staff responsibility or not. The administrative processes are captured as internal and external organizational relationships covered by seven questions in the survey (for full wording of the questions, see the appendix). This may not capture all administrative processes but together with staff responsibility and employment at national or sub-national level, we look at nine different aspects of administrative organization. The expected link

between organizational structures and processes to civil servants' valuation of citizens' participation are discussed below.

Administrative structures point at the territorial division between national and sub-national administrations. Although it has been argued that direct participation was not an issue for the founding father of American public administrative research, Woodrow Wilson did pay attention to the positive impact of direct citizen engagement in smaller communities (cities) (Cook, 2007, p. 298–299). First, smaller communities resemble administrative units with hands-on implementation where similar demands on checks and balances of power are not as important as at the national level. Second, local authorities are more exposed to frictions between forces of differentiation and have an obligation to serve as brokers and use participation as a tool for community negotiation and deliberation. Moreover, Elinor Ostrom (1990) contends that collaborative decision making is especially contributing to public choices in smaller settings compared to larger communities. Consequently, it is expected that civil servants in sub-national administrations tend to look at participation more positively than state administrators.

Administrative processes distinguish between internal and external relationships. Internal relationships are depicted through hierarchy, meritocracy and management. First, in hierarchical organizations, decision making and responsibilities are placed at the top level and concrete tasks at the lower ranks. In such structures, citizens' participation may challenge the chain of command by questioning the superiority of the leader's decision. Furthermore, the argument is not only in line with Peters and Pierre's (2000) warning that participation may circumvent representative democratic decision making. It is also empirically substantiated as King et al. (1998, p. 319) find that reluctance towards participation among American civil servants in the early 1990s can be traced to the traditional understanding that hierarchical public administration is about *administering* the public. The argument is further supported by

Bryer (2009, p. 277), who suggests that administrators' hesitation to collaborate with citizens could be a reminiscence of Weber's fear that bureaucracy creates an iron cage of experts, isolated from societies. The negative effect of hierarchical organizations is both theoretically grounded and empirically substantiated (Yang and Panday, 2011).

Second, merit-based recruitment implies that civil servants' appointments and promotions relate to their formal merits, especially their formal education. Thus, more than anything, meritocracy is thought to enhance professionalism and neutrality. On the one hand, this implies that civil servants have a technocratic view on public administration tasks and thus see citizens' participation as an unnecessary burden. On the other hand, meritocracy assumes better educated civil servants who through their integrity can embrace inclusion as a democratic virtue and not as a risk to neutrality or a threat to their professionalism. It is noteworthy that meritocracy has been considered to protect civil servants from undue pressure (Christensen, 2012, p. 110) and to decrease corruption (Dahlström et al., 2012). It is expected that civil servants employed through meritocratic processes tend to have a more positive view on participation.

Third, management and external relations to private actors are thought to matter for civil servants' values. Managerial authority and a clear formulation of policy objectives do not necessarily match citizens' influence in the process. Accordingly, and for similar reasons as for hierarchical structure, it is expected that civil servants who sit in organizations with high levels of monitoring and precise goal setting would be more reluctant towards citizen participation.

Experience with and practices of including private actors may also influence civil servants' values. Akin to the increase of complexity and lessening of central political control following structural devolution (Christensen & Lægreid, 2001, p. 81), intensive coordination with external actors is necessary to maintain political control, as interference by outside actors

tends to increase the complexity of decision making because these actors send other signals of decision. Inclusion of citizens, in this context, adds to the already complex organizational environment and may, accordingly, not enable a positive view. Experiences with involvement may enhance a positive view of further inclusion, but involvement raises the risk of state capture.

The context of a Soviet legacy

The structure of Soviet administration was institutionally fragmented with non-existing separation of powers (Sarapuu, 2012 referring to Hesse, 1997). In 1970, Brzezinski (1970) contended that internally the Soviet bureaucracy worked in line with Weber's emphasis on hierarchical subordination and technical competences. However, Brzezinski's interpretation overlooks that Weberian bureaucracy is founded on legal-rational principles and emphasises meritocracy in recruitment and remuneration, which contrasted Soviet reality (Pakulski, 1986, p. 5-6). With respect to citizens' participation, the Soviet legacy affects two aspects in particular. First, the Soviet Union adhered to a doctrine of "democratic centralism" combining formal institutionalization of inclusion and active participation of citizens with the absolute centralized leadership of the Communist Party (The Soviet Constitution, 1977, Articles 3, 8 and 6 respectively). Second, the primary task of Soviet administrations was to fulfil the goals formulated by the party organization, a task which was not aligned with citizen inclusion or involvement. Moreover, administrative reality broke and bent formal regulations in order to fulfil the tasks formulated by the superior (Pakulski, 1986, p. 18-19; Ledeneva, 1998, p. 77). Thus, the legacy of political control and technocratic management of public administrations may still discourage civil servants from embracing ideas of citizens' participation. Moreover, as Soviet reality effectively destroyed civic engagement outside the realm of the Communist Party, a legacy of civic apathy can still be seen (Howard, 2003). Thus citizens' participation

may actually serve as a policy tool to enhance democratic engagement. We now turn to a discussion of the research design and survey method.

Methods: A Baltic laboratory and the survey at hand

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania share the most comprehensive set of common features and constitute an almost perfect most similar systems design within the sample of post-communist countries. Choosing the Baltic States for an analysis of developments and changes in civil servants' values thus reduces the effect of background variables such as late statehood, degree of inclusion in the Soviet economic, political and administrative practice, and post-transitional choices of political institutions (Johannsen & Pedersen, 2011a) while stressing recent developments of administrative reforms.

Although the analytical focus is on differences at the individual level, between country differences may matter. During the 1990s and early 2000s, Estonia outperformed Latvia and Lithuania with respect to economic reform and growth and lower levels of perceived corruption (Johannsen & Pedersen, 2011b, 2012). After the EU accession and a hastened period of capacity building, similarities between the Baltic States are underlined when they are compared to the Central European countries, but compared to Latvia and Lithuania, Estonia in many respects still stands out (Verheijen, 2007). With respect to Lithuania, the insufficient state capacity was a critical impediment to Europeanization (Nakrošis, 2001). Recent trends aside, Panagiotou contends that even though the three countries share a Soviet legacy they do so only to a certain degree and that Estonia in the transition process capitalized on specific conditions prior to independence (2001, p. 275; Meyer-Sahling 2009). In general, however, the extensive changes in civil service personnel after 1990, whether that be due to more lucrative jobs in the private sector or staff reductions due to budget shortage, question whether a Soviet legacy are carried at the personnel level (Lazareviciute et al., 2001, p. 239;

Jansone & Reinholde, 2001, p. 211; Sootla, 2001, p. 128-129). Added to this, the institutional changes during the first formative years were driven by a rejection of the Soviet legacy (Nakrošis, 2001, p. 172). Thus, the comprehensive and consistent strategy towards the West and especially EU during the 1990s suggests that values held by present day civil servants resemble an antithesis to a Soviet past.

The data for this study were collected during April 2011 as part of a project on administrative capacity and corruption.¹ Overall, 1706 civil servants completed the questionnaires and are regarded as representative of Baltic civil servants (see table 1). Respondents were randomly selected among civil servants who according to national codes possess decision authority, per instruction or discretion, typically carrying the title 'Head of Section' or higher to distinguish them from public servants like librarians, nurses or teachers. To be representative of Baltic civil servants a minimum of 500 respondents (completed or almost completed interviews) were stipulated. In addition, a quarter of the respondents had to be employed at the national level.

Insert Table 1 about here

Three reservations to the data need mentioning. First, differences in national views on how best to approach civil servants resulted in different sampling strategies: web survey in Estonia, telephone interviews in Latvia and Lithuania. Moreover, the Latvian bureau used a more elaborate introduction to the project. The response rates were 37, 76 and 25 percent for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania respectively. The sampling strategies may have introduced a bias in who you reach and how they respond. A web survey may affect answers, as it is less intrusive and suffers less from a social desirability effect. The high number of respondents and the overall representativeness should, however, compensate on all accounts.

Language is a second concern. The survey questions were originally in English, translated to the respective Baltic languages and back-translated into English to ensure consistency. During this process, it was made sure that scholarly terminology, for example “merit-based organization”, was transformed into everyday language referring to the applicant’s “skills and individual strengths” as causes for recruitment.

Third, the dependent variable is a dichotomous question of whether ‘an increase in citizens’ participation will make a decisive and positive change for your organization’. There are no subsequent questions as to why participation would or would not have this effect. The respondents’ considerations may depend on whether they think of inclusion in term of democratic virtue or efficiency benefits. We return to the difference in the analysis when appropriate.

The aim of the survey has been to establish a baseline study of three post-communist countries linking their emerging administrative structures and processes to the question of inclusion. The analysis is conducted as logistic regressions for the full model including all three countries. In addition, logistic regressions for each country are reported. This is a further control for possible biases due to survey management. Moreover, similar does not mean identical and the report of country-wise models highlights possible country differences. Before we turn to the analyses, the next section describes the formal and informal administrative processes.

Formal and informal organization of public administration

By 2004 all three countries fulfilled the public administration baseline requirement for EU membership stressing political neutrality, professionalism and transparency, competitiveness, and accountability (Palisdauskaite 2011). The emphasis was on formal changes such as civil service legislation (Randma-Liiv and Järvalt 2011, p. 39). Palidauskaite et al. (2010, p. 49)

concluded that ‘the civil service systems in all three Baltic countries are more or less similar’. This said, the implementation of the legal framework on the civil service and administration has been found to be incomplete (Unpan 2004a, b, c; Dimitrova 2005, p. 84). Although external actors, especially EU, were strong players in the intense reorganization their impact was mediated by national interest and conditions (Nakrošis & Budraitis, 2012, p. 827; Sarapuu, 2012, p. 818).

In terms of citizens’ participation the legal requirements are at best weak. The EU governance principles strongly encourage a governance model with increased inclusion of civil society actors in public policy making processes (EU 2001), but in the absence of a concrete EU *aquis* on the issue, practice is to be decided domestically. In Latvia and Lithuania citizens have constitutional rights to direct participation in the work of state/local government in addition to voting rights (Latvian and Lithuanian constitutions, art. 101 and 33 respectfully). In Estonia, the constitution is silent about direct participation, but citizens’ participation in the political process is encouraged in the Estonian Public Service Code of Ethics of 1999 (Palidaukaite, 2005, p. 42). To our knowledge, legislation is otherwise remarkably silent about how public administrators should relate to citizens.

Formal legislation aside, civil servants’ attitude towards citizens’ participation is affected by informal practices rather than formal requirements. In order to identify practices we have established a battery of questions on how the administrative processes are perceived in the respondents’ organization. We use a seven-point Likert scale: Seven indicates that one of the characteristics of administrative processes, for example hierarchical order, is always present and one that it is never present. The general picture is illustrated in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here.

From a bird's eye perspective, the shape of the web chart demonstrates that the public administrations share characteristics across the three countries. The public administrations in the Baltic countries are mostly based on merit recruitment and hierarchically organized and all seem to avoid decision making based on personal networks.² Although the sheer number of respondents drives the statistical test, a few reflections about country differences are in order.

Despite similarities, Estonian civil servants experience fewer merit-based appointments and find monitoring and communication of policy goals less impressive, while private sector participation is more profound. This corroborates Sarapuu's (2012, p. 811) finding that Estonian state administration has favoured multi-functionality and special agencies, which he explains by the elite's strong and coherent neo-liberal worldview that favoured a slim state and reluctance towards bureaucratic mushrooming. According to Drechsler (2004), this liberal mind-set also implied higher receptiveness of New Public Management ideas including private sector participation in implementation, which in his mind led to coordination failures and undermined governing capacity. In contrast to Estonian dedication to neo-liberalism, the Lithuanian and Latvian transitions were more gradually and until the end of the 1990s among the laggards in the run for EU membership (Nørgaard & Johannsen, 1999; Johannsen & Pedersen, 2009). This explanation hardly applies to the different perceptions of meritocracy in practice although it may reflect that Lithuania uses a centralized system of recruitment into the civil service as a system that was strengthened in June 2013 (author's interview, May 2013). With respect to less monitoring in Estonia, a deliberate political focus on performance-based management in Latvia and Lithuania may serve as an explanation (Verheijen & Dobrolyubova, 2007). Thus turning to the analysis of the relation between administrative structures and processes, country variation as a possible explanatory factor is still not excluded.

Patterns in civil servants' assessment of citizens' participation

To gauge the civil servants' assessment of citizens' participation, respondents were asked whether an "increase in citizens' participation would make a decisive and positive change for your organization". The basic results are shown in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

Almost half of the respondents (47.8 percent) see more citizens' participation as a positive and important organizational change. This lukewarm support for increased citizens' participation stands in contrast to findings in a US context (Yang & Panday 2011). The difference may be an artifact given the crude measure we employ but may also reflect a legacy of Soviet lip service to citizen empowerment in concert with a post-communist weak civil society. Still, some notable differences between countries, the administrative levels and the individual respondent's management position should be noticed. Estonians have least belief in the increased value of participation, while a solid majority among Latvian administrators find more participation positive. Looking at characteristics of the respondents' position, the largest difference relates to the level of public administration. Only one in four in the state administration favours an increase in citizens' involvement, whereas a majority in the sub-national administrations is positive. This echo the theoretical assumptions about the advantage of smallness, but 'where you sit' is also a question of job function and the kind of issues you deal with. To illustrate, respondents working in justice and judicial affairs were on average, least positive towards citizens' participation (not reported in Table 2).³This adds to the point made by Yang & Callahan (2007) that there are areas in which citizens perhaps should not be included. With respect to respondents' management positions, the differences

are about five percentage points; those with staff responsibility are less negative about participation.

The results in Table 2 suggest that different contexts imply different values but reveal nothing about the strength of the relations and which context is the most important. To reiterate the question if and how administrative structures and processes affect the perception of citizens' participation, four logistic models are developed (Table 3). In addition to the independent organizational variables, the respondents' managerial position is included as a control.

Insert Table 3 about here

The full model in the fourth column in Table 3 includes the three countries with Lithuania as reference country, while the first three columns represent identical models for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania respectively. Across the board, the full Baltic model correctly predicts approximately 64 percent.⁴ That Nagelkerke's R^2 is 14.6 percent for the full model but only 10.2 percent for Latvia indicates that national characteristics are still at stake. Even though the full model specifies dummy variables for Estonia and Latvia, our choice to include models for each of the three countries not only serves as a robustness confirmation but also reflects Olsen's (2008, p. 27) argument that the relationship and significance of the administrative organization change over place and time. The overall picture in the full model is that appreciation of citizens' participation relates significantly to merit, hierarchy and experiences with involvement of private parties in policy implementation. In addition and confirming the heuristically devised results from Table 2, Latvian civil servants are more positive towards participation than their Estonian and Lithuanian colleagues, and civil servants employed at sub-national level are more positive than those employed at state level. In turn, neither

management position nor internal efficiency issues such as coordination, monitoring and clear objectives relate significantly to citizens' participation. However, in the Lithuanian survey, clear objectives are significant in the expected direction. This will be commented further below.

Meritocracy increases the belief that an increase in citizens' participation will make a decisive and positive change. The odds ratio shows how the likelihood of having this belief increases about 20 percent with each increase in the perception that recruitment to the respondent's organization is based on skills and merits. In all three countries, public administrations at state level are formally based on meritocratic principles (Palidauskaite, 2011), and as evident from Figure 1 meritocratic recruitment is a widespread practice. Other studies have shown that formal meritocracy goes hand in hand with less corruption, thus suggesting a higher level of integrity (Rauch & Evans, 2000; Rubin & Withford, 2008; Dahlström et al., 2012). Accordingly, we argue that when meritocracy relates to inclusive values, it may be because inclusiveness does not impede administrative integrity.

Looking at country differences, meritocracy carries the same sign in all models but is only statistically significant in Estonia. One explanation is a general difference between human resource management systems in the three countries. While Estonia has a position-based system, Lithuania and Latvia have mixed systems that include elements of a career-based system (Palidauskaite et al., 2010, p. 47). Statistically, the standard deviation is highest among the Estonian respondents – pulling the analysis – but also suggesting a higher degree of socialization to the esprit de corps in the career-based systems of Lithuania and Latvia.⁵ Regarding socialization Zhang & Yang (2009, p. 303-5) find, in survey of city managers, that managers with MPA degrees are more positive towards citizens' participation. They argue that it is a likely outcome of a socialization process through MPA programs that shapes cognition and attitudes. We cannot fully replicate Zhang & Yang's procedure, but in our data

there is little correlation between the respondents' education, the degree of meritocracy and the value placed on citizens' participation. This need not be contradictory to the socialization process proposed by Zhang & Yang as they emphasize MPA programs where "public administration scholars have been advocating for more citizen participation and democratic citizenship" (2009, p. 305) – something which may not have reached the curriculum of Baltic university education.

Experience with non-state actors' involvement in implementation also increases the belief in the value of participation. With an odds ratio of 1.156, respondents moving one point up on the seven-point scale are about 15 percent more likely to hold a positive view on participation. It carries the expected sign across all models but is only significant in the Lithuanian survey and the full model. Noting that in Lithuania, inclusion of private parties in decision making is extremely rare (see Figure 1) – a mean about two on the seven-point scale – the positive value may simply indicate that increased inclusion is thought to be positive due to the low practice. Similarly it may be argued that the higher frequency of inclusion in Estonia and Latvia – mean about five and four respectively – indicates that "enough is enough", that is, more inclusion would not be positive, but inclusion at this level may all in all be valued. This is supported by the fact that those who evaluate the inclusion of private involvement in implementation as three on the seven-point scale express the highest support for participation with 61.0 percent in favour. Basically these considerations imply that citizens' participation is a question of balance.

Whereas meritocracy and private involvement relate positively to participation, it is, as expected and corresponding to Yang and Panday's (2011) finding, the reverse for hierarchy. The more hierarchical the organization, the less participation is valued. With an odds ratio of 0.902, respondents are 10 percent less likely to value participation for each level on the scale from one to seven. That hierarchy reduces the positive attitude makes sense and lends support

to the expectation that participation can obfuscate the command chain, and because citizens are likely to have different opinions than the bureau, bureaucrats may see them as unnecessary trouble and difficult to work with. The reluctance towards participation in hierarchical organizations parallels the risk of goals displacement when citizens are involved.

Effective monitoring and communicating clear objectives within the organization tap the internal management dimension of public administration while the degree of coordination with other public authorities and decision making in personal networks tap the external dimension of management. Citizens' participation may blur monitoring and clear goals set for the organization, resulting in less management manoeuvrability, or it may increase organizational complexity and the risk of partial decision making. None of the four items have significant explanatory force. Clear objectives only contribute significantly in the Lithuanian model and, like hierarchy, correlate negatively with increased participation. National administrative cultures may contribute to this explanation. Pivoras (2013) argues that civil servants in Lithuania have a self-image of being professional and expert oriented pointing to an administrative culture of steering that in itself is expected to relate negatively to citizens' involvement (Kathi & Cooper, 2005).

A final explanation of citizens' participation is the territorial structure of public administrations; the main distinction here between state and sub-national administrators. This relation is evident from Table 3 and supported by Table 2, which reveal that only about a quarter of the state administrators believe that citizens' participation is positive for their organization. Zhang & Liao (2011, p. 289) argue, although unable to confirm the statistical association proposed, that rather than community size budget size might be a better predictor of citizens' participation 'because a larger budget will draw more attention'. There is substantial logic to this argument and the fact that sub-national administrators in the Baltic states believe more in participation may not only be an issue of the importance of smallness.

The administrative reforms following independence have left Estonia and Latvia with small local governments. On average, there are 5,500 and 4,300 inhabitants in Estonian and Latvian local municipalities and even fewer if the capitals are excluded from the calculation (Vanags & Vilka, 2006; Ruus, 2011, p. 280). This is compared to an average of 65,000 inhabitants on average in Lithuanian municipalities (Vanags & Vilka, 2006). The Latvian local governments have in particular been financially unviable and largely unable to provide the service functions ascribed to them. There is a shortage of qualified personnel (King et al., 2004; Vanags & Vilka, 2006) and, as a result, widespread distrust in local governments (Vanags & Vilka, 2006, p. 634). In turn, our result lends credit to MacNair et al.'s (1983) theory of an inverse relationship between the perceived power of the administration and citizens' participation. Thus to paraphrase MacNair et al. (p. 521) and following Bryer (2009, p. 280), the relatively powerless sub-national governments in the Baltic states ally themselves with the citizens in order to foster strong constituencies. A line of thought Peters and Pierre (2000) take up when they note that one of the downsides of participation – increased public spending – is a result of strategic use of citizens' support for reform and funding. Against this background, it is less surprising that local administrators in general and in Latvia in particular see citizens' participation as positive. In short, whereas Zhang & Liao (2011) focus on the supply side of participation our results highlight the demand side. Citizens' participation may thus be valued for quite different reasons.

In sum, views on the desirability of citizens' inclusion reflect how civil servants experience their organization. Four aspects in the civil servants' organizational context contribute to attitudes towards increased participation. First, merit-based appointments secure professional and qualified personnel who, accordingly, do not see citizens' participation and inclusion as a threat. Second, experience with public participation is important for a positive view but there seems to be an upper limit. Third, employment in hierarchical organizations

seems to foster a negative view. This follows the theoretical expectation that inclusion challenge the core rationality behind the hierarchical chain of command structures. However, changing towards flatter administrative structures may not, as advocated by some new public management literature (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011), be a solution unless it is accompanied by strict professionalism, in other words high scores on meritocracy in recruitment and remuneration. Finally, sub-national administrators' positive view on participation, which seems to rest with the virtues of smallness and task specifications, supplements the explanatory strength of the full model.

Conclusion – the importance to strike the right balance

At the outset, we want to recognize the limitations of this study. Precautions due to difficulties operating a survey in a multi-country setting and the linguistic challenges are previously discussed at length. Because the survey was originally designed to study administrative corruption, we have been limited in addressing the circumstances under which participation is beneficial or not. In particular, the survey falls short of addressing why our respondents find participation beneficial. Is this related to democratic values of inclusion and transparency or seen in terms of administrative effectiveness? We also recognize the limitation in using perceptions. However, perceptions are recognized as valid indicators for organizational properties (for a discussion see Yang & Callahan 2007, p. 259). Given unclear implementation of formal legislation in particularly in cases of transition countries, to depict actual administrative structures and processes we have to rely on civil servants as informants.

This said, the study breaks fresh ground in establishing a baseline study of citizens' participation in post-communist. The three Baltic states have been through extensive reforms – political, social, economic and administrative in the last two decades. Citizens' participation may be sought to enhance transparency of the public administration and increase democratic

control from below but also worthwhile to pursue in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness of public policies. However, citizens' participation is not only positive. Inclusion may increase administrative complexity and displace policy goals. Irrespective of the pros and cons we argue that the civil servants perception of whether participation is positive for their organisation is a key in developing participation and that the civil servants' perception are influenced not only by "where you sit", in the national or sub-national administrations, but also "how you sit".

We find that the civil servants' experiences with organizational structure and processes are more important to their view on citizen inclusion than country differences. This said, Latvia does stand out in the full model, and some administrative structures and processes show significant signs in country-specific models but not in others. These differences ask for further studies to include more cases to control for legacies, economic challenges and social capital, but do not jeopardize the main finding.

Three key findings and implications from the study stand out. First, we find that meritocracy significantly contributes to positive effects of citizens' participation upon the administration. We argue that meritocracy strengthens administrative integrity thus mitigating the risk of capture and corruption. The implication is, akin to SIGMA (1999), that the post-communist countries should strengthen the Weberian elements of administration – specifically with respect to education and personal selection policies. Second, we find that experience with involvement of private actors in implementation does relate to positive views on increased participation but only to a certain degree. The results from the full model and the country-specific model indicate that experience and positive attitudes towards inclusion are good up to a certain point, but also imply a risk of particularistic decision making in public administration. As noted by Callahan (2007b, p. 952) it is a challenge to find 'the right balance between rational, responsive, and efficient administration with open, deliberate, and

collaborative decision making'. Given the limitations of the study, one implication is that future research could distinguish between different functions performed by administrators as we expect that the perception of participation differ between units. That is the cost will outweigh the benefits of including citizens in units with general regulatory functions and with sectoral regulatory functions. In contrast, units that make decisions on zero-sum distribution of scarce resources and/or provide services to the community and citizens will benefit from the legitimizing effect of participation. Third, we find that the differences in perception between national and sub-national administrations stress that inclusion may serve to enlarge the constituency of relatively weak sub-national administration rather than spirited arguments of democracy and efficiency. The implication is that citizens' participation is also a question of building politically viable coalitions. We believe that future comparative studies of administrative reform where inclusion is on the agenda can shed more light on the political logic which, for better or worse, may be different than the logic of democratization and/or administrative effectiveness.

Notes

¹ The survey was supported by the Danish Research Council grant no. 0602-01231B FSE.

² According to a post-hoc comparison of means, country-wise differences are significant.

³ Mean = 0.162, N =142.

⁴ Although the model generally fares well, it needs to be improved. One problem is missing values in the Lithuanian sample, which restricts the results. A strategy to boost the Lithuanian sample could be to employ averages for missing values. However, as we are interested in the effect of the administrative context to participatory values, we chose a conservative strategy in order not to trade off an improvement in the number of responses for the risk of blurring the administrative contexts.

⁵ Estonia (mean = 5.39; std.d. = 1.49); Lithuania (mean = 5.91; std.d. = 1.37); Latvia (mean = 5.98; std.d. = 1.08).

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Appendix 1. Survey questions

Scale: 1 'never' to 7 'always'.

- Merit: Recruitment of employees is based on the applicant's skills and merits
- Hierarchy: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Is your organization hierarchically structured?
- Clear goals: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The policy objectives of my organization are precise and clearly formulated.
- Monitoring: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The work is effectively monitored by the management.
- Private network decisions: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Decisions are made on the basis of personal networks.
- Private sector participation: Thinking about the relation between your organization and other actors: Private parties (individuals, firms, NGOs) are involved in the implementation of the organization's policy objectives.
- Coordination: Thinking about the relation between your organization and other actors: How often do you think that the tasks related to your organization and other actors are highly coordinated?

Figure 1. Administrative processes in practice by country (mean)

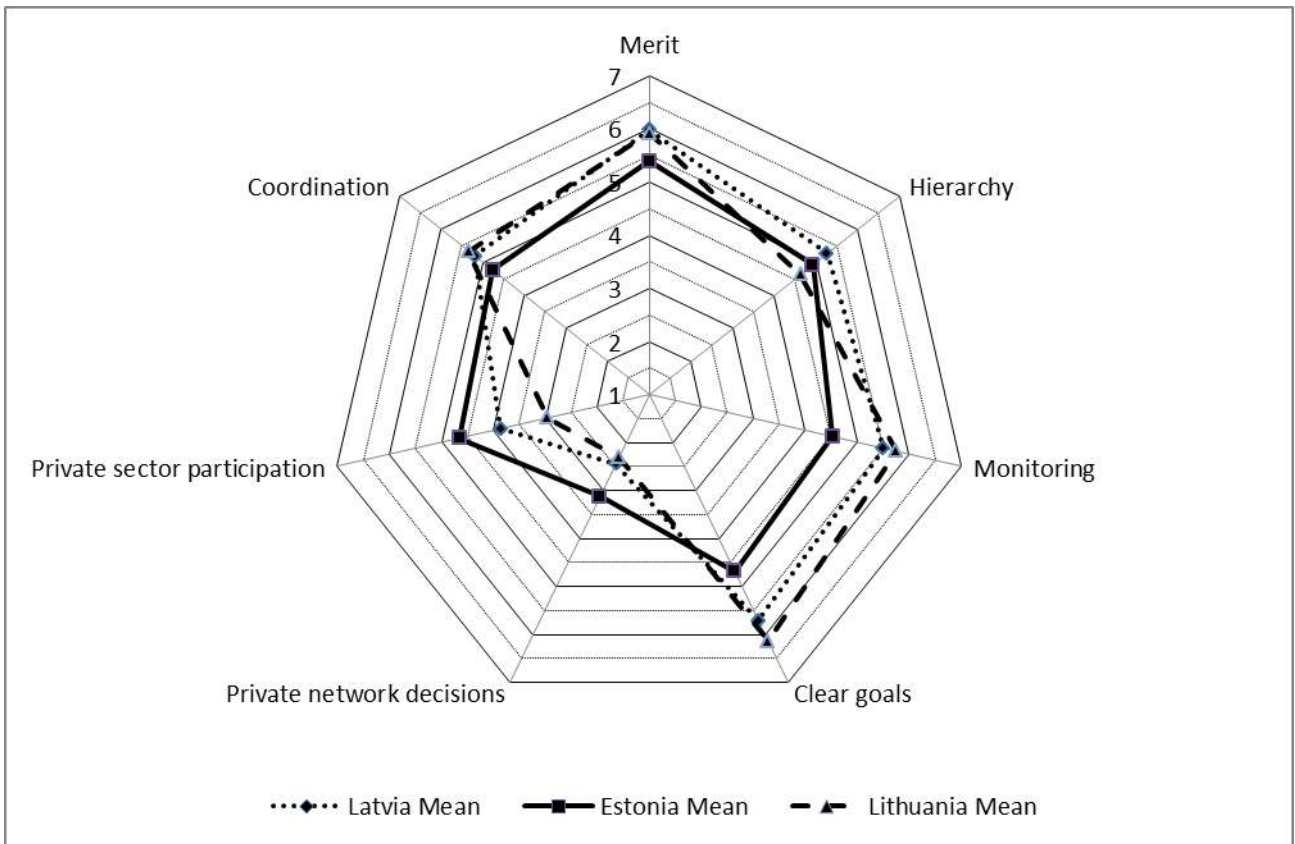


Table 1: Sample size. Distribution on countries, level of administration, gender and age intervals (N; Pct.)

		Estonia		Latvia		Lithuania		Total	
		N	Pct.	N	Pct.	N	Pct.	N	Pct.
Administrative level	State	155	22.0	123	24.6	152	30.4	430	25.2
	Sub-national	551	78.0	377	75.4	348	69.6	1276	74.8
Gender	Female	516	73.1	283	56.6	294	58.8	1093	64.1
	Men	190	26.9	217	43.4	206	42.2	613	35.9
Age intervals	-40	91	13.1	40	8.0	53	10.6	184	10.9
	40-49	230	33.1	171	34.4	200	40.0	601	35.5
	50-59	203	29.2	171	34.4	141	28.4	515	30.4
	60-	171	24.6	115	23.1	106	21.1	392	23.2
Country sample		706	100.0	500	100.0	500	100.0	1706	100.0

Table 2. Belief that increased participation will be a positive change (per cent)

		N	Percent
Country	Latvia	500	57.2
	Estonia	706	43.2
	Lithuania	500	45.0
Administrative level	National administration	430	26.7
	Sub-national administration	1276	54.9
Management position	No staff responsibility	332	44.6
	Staff responsibility	1002	49.4
Total		1706	47.8

Table 3. Predictions of belief in citizens' participation

	Estonia			Latvia			Lithuania			Baltic		
	B	Exp (β)		B	Exp (β)		β	Exp (β)		β	Exp (β)	
Constant	-2.645			-1.648			-0.259			-1.917		
Estonia(1)										-0.172	0.842	
Latvia (1)										0.397	1.488	*
National- sub-national (0:1)	1.591	4.909	***	1.082	2.949	***	0.724	2.064	*	1.203	3.328	***
Management position (staff responsibility = 1)	0.276	1.317		-0.094	0.910		-0.795	0.452		0.079	1.082	
Meritocracy	0.272	1.312	**	0.192	1.211		0.077	1.081		0.187	1.206	***
Hierarchy	-0.076	0.927		-0.088	0.916		-0.124	0.883	*	-0.104	0.902	**
Clear objectives	-0.102	0.903		0.047	1.048		-0.263	0.769	*	-0.083	0.920	
Private parties involvement	0.125	1.113		0.089	1.094		0.258	1.294	***	0.145	1.156	***
Decisions in personal networks	-0.060	0.942		0.086	1.090		-0.085	0.918		-0.017	0.983	
Coordination	0.034	1.035		-0.052	0.949		0.184	1.202		0.034	1.035	
Monitoring	-0.025	0.975		-0.007	0.993		0.076	1.079		0.007	1.007	
Model correctly predicted, percent	66.0			63.6			65.6			64.4		
N	447			451			256			1154		

Estonia: Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.174$; Cox and Snell $R^2 = 0.130$; Hosmer and Lemeshow: $\chi^2(8) = 3.920$, $p = 0.864$;

Latvia: Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.102$; Cox and Snell $R^2 = 0.076$; Hosmer and Lemeshow: $\chi^2(8) = 9.504$, $p = 0.302$;

Lithuania: Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.180$; Cox and Snell $R^2 = 0.134$ Hosmer and Lemeshow: $\chi^2(8) = 5.951$, $p = 0.653$;

Baltic Model: Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.146$; Cox and Snell $R^2 = 0.109$; Hosmer and Lemeshow: $\chi^2(8) = 8.427$, $p = 0.393$.

Level of significance: *** = 0,001; ** = 0.01; * = 0.05; See appendix 1 for the coding of all explanatory variables.