

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

Department of Marketing Communication and Public Relations

Dissertation Thesis

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Štěpán Soukeník

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***Government Communication in the Czech Republic:
Organisation, Perception, and New Theoretical Model***

Dissertation Thesis

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Abstract

This dissertation thesis titled ‘Government Communication in the Czech Republic: Organisation, Perception, and New Theoretical Model’ is a seminal, exploratory work which contextualizes and maps the development of government communication in the Czech Republic from its foundation to the present time with a primary research emphasis on the years between 2015 and 2017. Stemming from interdisciplinary theoretical sources within media and communication, public policy, and management scholarship, the thesis redefines the way of thinking about government communication. It applies stakeholder theory paradigm by researching government institutions, private sector, and news media as three important actors of government communication. Analysing the organization, perception, and tensions of government communication, the dissertation thesis aims to introduce new theoretical model of government communication and provide the government, private sector, and other societal actors with challenging perspectives on their practices and *status quo*.

Abstrakt

Dizertační práce s názvem „Vládní komunikace v České republice: Organizace, vnímání a nový teoretický model“ je explorativní prací, která mapuje vývoj vládní komunikace v České republice od svého vzniku do současnosti s primárním výzkumným zaměřením na časové období mezi lety 2015 a 2017. Vychází z interdisciplinárních teoretických zdrojů v rámci mediálních a komunikačních studií, politologie, veřejné správy a managementu a redefinuje tak náhled na vládní komunikaci. Práce zkoumá státní správu, soukromý sektor a zpravodajská média jako tři důležité aktéry vládní komunikace. Cílem práce je navrhnout nový teoretický model fungování vládní komunikace, popsat organizaci, vnímání a zásadní problémy vládní komunikace v České republice. Dizertační práce má zároveň ambici poskytnout státní správě, privátnímu sektoru a široké veřejnosti podnětné náhledy na jejich chování a *status quo*.

Keywords

Government communication, public sector communication, stakeholder theory, public affairs, strategic communication, new s media, public sphere, Czech Republic

Klíčová slova

Vládní komunikace, komunikace státní správy, teorie stakeholderů, public affairs, strategická komunikace, zpravodajská média, veřejná sféra, Česká republika

Length of the work: 135 pages

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes and I support its open sharing

In Prague on 3 September 2018

Štěpán Soukeník

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I. INTRODUCTION

Today we live in an era of a steadily increasing complexity of communication processes in the public sphere. In democratic countries, numerous actors such as individual citizens, communities, government organizations, non-governmental organizations, private sector representatives, and, notwithstanding, media institutions, intrinsically need to keep a precise and comprehensive idea of what the authorities decide on. At the same time, citizens worldwide steadily lose their interest in public participation. In a ubiquitous information overload, it has become tougher than ever before for politicians and public-sector institutions to deliver their messages to various societal target groups which need to watch and react on political and government actions in order to know the presence and predict the future.

Why is it interesting to examine governments and their communication practices? Global governments neither exist nor act in a vacuum. They are nexus hubs, transmitters, and often also leaders of power dependencies and information flows in the system. The character of government communication, its quality and scope directly or indirectly affect citizen consent and happiness, economic performance, and sustainable development of all individuals, groups, and institutions in a society. Given these wider presumptions and also the author's regional knowledge and origin, this doctoral thesis analyses contemporary government communication in the Czech Republic, a country in the heart of Europe which has long fought against different forms of authoritarian leadership and which, in 2018, commemorates 100 years since the birth of Czechoslovakia, 50 years since 1968 invasion, and 25 years since its sovereign establishment.

The thesis primarily argues that focusing on the organizational and perceptual characteristics is key for understanding Czech government communication's presence and near past. The inner purpose is to offer a new perspective on the presence and future development of government communication which is a substantially wider issue exceeding the Czech Republic and the region of Central and Eastern Europe. Among all possible stakeholder groups and institutions that influence government communication in the society, this research study intentionally focuses on the private sector and news media organizations, their purpose and role in forming government communication image and flow.

Among numerous attempts to understand information flows and power dependencies in democratic societies, system theory has influenced the underpinnings and methodologies of both political and communication science since the 1930s, and it is the major research paradigm influencing this text as well. Von Bertalanffy (1968, p.7) stressed in his seminal work which interlinked cell biology and social systems that ‘social phenomena must be considered as systems.’ It means that the society comprises nodes and links which are interconnected in mutual information exchange cycles not much different from cells in the nature. Timeliness of linking theories between social and natural sciences has recently been proven by the rise of new research fields in social sciences. Digital government, computational social science, digital humanities, and network science are some of the terms representing attempts to describe the changing world around us, ultimately influenced by the global proliferation of advanced wire networks which enable the functionality of the Internet (Dutton 2009; Pentland, 2014; Wooley and Howard, 2017).

Approximately twenty-five years since the launch of the Web, studying governmental adoption of new technologies and its consequences on their relations with other societal actors has become mature and gradually more analytically prolific. However, the studies often flagship the buzz, technological gadgets, and they are obsessed with concentrating on the word ‘digital’ rather than on an actor and process analysis. This thesis engages in the contemporary research debate in communication studies, yet, it takes a different perspective by emphasising the fact that if we really want to dig deeper and understand the consequences of changes in governance and relations between societal actors unleashed by the flattening of our World, we ought to deconstruct stakeholder roles and characteristics in political and government communication, and mutual perceptions of power holders on the information exchange.

Communication and media world are constantly defined and shaped by power relationships of two or more actors (Castells, 2009). The character of such a relationship depends on a degree of democratic advancement of a society¹. Democratic governance presumes

¹ Rich datasets can be used for our deeper understanding of global power balance tendencies. There are several globally-recognized rankings which compare characteristics that tell us more about the notion of communication and power in a country such as Freedom House Annual Report (2015, n.p.), Polity IV Report (Center for Systemic Peace, 2010,

high level of consent and balance between the major nodes in society, i.e. government, political sphere, media, citizens, and private sector. The more freedom is limited in various areas of public life, the more power relationship between the actors is misbalanced. Declining trust in government organizations and politicians, the rise of political extremism, and the emergence of new, alternative news outlets can also be perceived as a possible signal of a slow-down dynamics and a gap in government communication professionalization processes. Such a state of societal communication can be perceived as ‘poly-tomic’ (Kant, 1974, p. 174), interdisciplinary, and trans-boundary. In other words, there is an ongoing and never-ending battle of interests represented by various actors in the increasingly blurred online and offline space (Kocks and Raupp, 2014, p. 270).

In social sciences and more particularly in media and communication studies, the research field of political communication has examined numerous phenomena such as electoral campaigns, mediatization, political image-making, voting behaviour, and digital politics including eGovernment. Despite its undeniable presence in the political and media life, government communication as an interdisciplinary field within political communication that explores the relationship between the government or state sector authorities and stakeholders, either citizens, private sector, NGOs (non-governmental organizations), or news media outlets, is still at the very beginning of systematic scholarly investigation. Although mutual relationships and dependencies of diverse actors in the public sphere have drawn the attention of numerous social scientists until present, distinct nature of systematically planned and complex relationships between elected government authorities, and specific audiences remains unexplored (Sanders and Canel, 2013, p.10).

To understand the contemporary character of interpersonal, group, and institutional communication related to government actors, we also need to analyse motivation, interests,

n.p.), The Global Competitiveness Report 2015–2016 by The World Economic Forum (Schwab, 2015), Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index (2015, n.p.), The World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators (World Bank, 2015), and, going more digital, UN e-Government Survey (United Nations, 2016), or EU Commission Digital Economy and Society Index (European Commission, 2016a). These rankings are not self-sufficient indicators defining the power relationships in the society. Observing data in a comparative way helps us understand the differences between the countries.

target groups, aims, strategy, and tactics of those involved in the communication process. Central and local government organizations provide service to citizens and other stakeholders, prepare new legislation, and watch its implementation. Political actors including the Parliament and members of the Government govern the country, process new legislation, and set future path of domestic and foreign policy. Private companies aim to succeed within one or more markets, increase revenue, and strengthen brand equity. Non-governmental organizations want to keep their agenda in the public discourse and change or develop a behaviour, a process, or a state of things. Media play the role of negotiators, connectors, watch-dogs, and agenda-setters, however, the aim of most of the publishing houses is still more financial revenue-oriented (McChesney, 2008; Murdock and Wasko, 2007). Citizen aims are as diverse as their number, but some general tendencies can be watched today. Most importantly, not only they want to be informed, but also increasingly entertained, pampered, and, arguably, reinforced in their attitudes.

Generally argued, multiple actors strive for different objectives. Short-term aims depend on a plethora of external forces such as political, social, security, and economic situation. Nevertheless, if one assumes that all actors act rationally in the long-term, i.e. they follow the desire to win, to succeed, to fulfil own dreams or aims of a community or group, then the common denominator is, depending on a character of an actor, maximizing individual or group profits within the system which requires access to information and its distribution.

1.1. Regional and Thematic Context of the Thesis

This thesis has an ambition to break the existing gap in analysing niche communication aspects in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Development of media and communication disciplines is most comprehensively described in regions with traditional research scholarship, i.e. where English is used as an official academic language – United States of America, Canada, Australia and parts of Western Europe, especially United Kingdom and Scandinavia. Sub-disciplines and areas of research in communication which directly address issues and concerns related to democratic governance and notion of power balance such as political communication, public relations, public affairs, and government communication, have been rich of studies on such as US elections, professionalization of

communication, or critical reflections of political and social development within these countries in regard to communication flows.

Since the late 20th century, and especially in the beginning of the 21st century, this status quo has moderately begun to change. The rise of scholarship in Asia including studies on Chinese and Korean media, social media boosted revolutions and free speech censorship in the Middle East, and rapid communication infrastructure development in Africa have turned the attention towards developing regions and emerging countries. Certain level of scholarly interest has also been given to the region of the Central and Eastern Europe, particularly to the countries where Soviet Union had maintained a strong level of personal and societal control before 1989 including the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary; Baltic Countries, and a significant part of the Balkan peninsula. These countries have experienced a rapid development and politics of approaching the West since the beginning of the last decade of the 20th century.

One of the most intriguing regions within the CEE region is the so-called Visegrad Group, i.e. the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary. These areas have always stood between the West and the East, between the development and the fate of history, as well-described in Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands* (2010) and *Black Earth*, and Timothy Garton Ash's *Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague* (1990). The case study of Poland is a part of the pivotal Sanders and Canel's book on government communication. Focus on lobbying as one of the most focused topics of the communication between government and private sector is on the rise as all four countries' cases are present in Bitonti and Harris's *Lobbying in Europe* (2016). However, other regions and topics remain unexplored, even though they are becoming increasingly important and interesting in the wider EU discussions e.g. on migration, cohesion policy, and security including Eastern Partnership and relationships with Russia.

Assessing this region further, it can be argued that despite undeniable similarities, surprising differences in certain areas may be noticed. In 2016, Estonia was leading the digital society progress not only among post-communist countries, but also in the whole Europe. On the other hand, countries which have been falling behind in the DESI (European Commission, 2016a) are primarily located in Central and Eastern Europe, i.e. Bulgaria,

Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, France, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. In the Digital Public Services section of DESI (European Commission, 2016b), only Poland scores better among Visegrad Group countries, placing itself within an average of the EU. Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia lag at the far end of the ranking. It is unsurprising to observe that countries in Eastern Europe which are not members of the EU such as Ukraine, Belarus, and Serbia score low in the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (2015, n.p.), but 69th place of Bulgaria, 58th place of Romania, or 37th place of the Czech Republic are not great indicators of well-developed relations between government and businesses in these countries.

While looking at the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index within the Global Competitiveness Report 2015–2016 (Schwab, 2015), the Czech Republic leads the Visegrad Group region, scoring 31st, better than e.g. Italy, Spain, and Portugal, but significantly better than Slovakia at 67th position, and Hungary at the 63rd. This parameter could indicate that the Czech Republic is a bridge between Eastern and Western Europe in competitiveness which is mainly shaped by business power, but also by good government-led business environment conditions and export/import balance. Again, this makes the Czech Republic an interesting research subject which scores comparatively low in Visegrad Group in several important World Development Indicators such as 'Time required to start a business', 'Time required to register property', 'Time to prepare and pay taxes', and 'Ease of doing business' indicating that government communication and government-business relations may not be well-practiced and researched in this country (World Bank, 2015, n.p.).

Looking at thematic research foundations, perceiving the public sphere as a battleground of interests is a paradigm represented by thinkers and researchers often moving across social science disciplines. Key source of ideas came from two sociologists. First, Jürgen Habermas, a German sociologist and philosopher, provided a critical view on media causing 'colonisation of life worlds' and emphasised the purpose of rational actions in society, of approaching a consensus among actors leading to the creation and maintenance of public sphere in his seminal book called *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984, p. 356). Second, Niklas Luhmann (1982) who, critical of and in opposition to Habermas, claimed that communication is a key process within social systems.

In the second half of 20th century, Jürgen Habermas was followed by other philosophers, and political and communication scientists such as Elihu Katz (2009) who outlined that coalitions and oppositions might form between any of political actors and it implies that relations between these actors matter equally. It means that an intrinsic part of such a ‘political communication system’ is the presence of power, its dissolution and balance (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995; Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer, 2010). Blumler and Gurevitch emphasise the relationship between communicators and audiences in both normative and positive views. They suggest that political communication system is complex and consists of mutual dependencies of ‘the societal level; the inter-institutional level; the intra-institutional level; and the audience level’ (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995, p.101). Both public sphere and system theory principles form an important basis for our understanding of relations between major political and societal actors. Only then major issues we face today such as declining public trust in institutions, freedom of speech and source manipulation, decreasing consumer trust in news, and individual decision-making actions can be comprehensibly explained, understood, and analysed (Newman, 2018, n.p.).

At a vertical level, a political and government communication researcher can analyse the Office of the President, the Parliament, government ministries, regional and city councils, and various special authority bodies taking care of areas of life such as the Meteorological Office, Statistical Office, public schools, or state hospitals. As presented above, non-governmental stakeholders including private sector have the right to expect that political and government actors would make their life easier and more effective. Private sector may use a variety of communication channels and tools in the interaction with government such as expert groups present in legislative process, lobbying, calls for funding, subsidies, tenders, public consultations, government websites, or open data. Deeper described in other chapters, this thesis is looking at certain types of these channels and activities and investigates them.

1.2. Context of the Czech Republic

In 1993, the Czech Republic was founded as a final step of the process of institutional and political reconstruction. From the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, an authoritarian socialist satellite of Soviet Union which lasted until the Velvet Revolution in 1989/1990,

through the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic which prevailed until the end of 1992, to the formation of two separate countries, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the transformation of all aspects of everyday life had a major impact on government actions and perception. Twenty-five years later, the country is a member of the European Union, NATO, OECD, and further international and regional structures. It constitutes a regional borderline between the Western and Eastern Europe and thus it is fascinating and instructive to take a closer look at the historical development of 1990s when former Soviet bloc disintegrated into a variety of countries occupied by historic European nations, and on the key milestones that determined the path towards the present *status quo*.

In the years preceding the Velvet Revolution, horizontal division of society to a ruling minority and oppressed majority persisted (Hejlova and Klimeš, 2017, p. 173). Government communication intervened all areas of public and private life. Full of Marxist-Leninist ideology, anti-Western narratives, and mobilization towards unity of thinking, public opinion, and actions, we can argue that propaganda was inherently entangled with government communication and at least in the domestic targeting of communication flows, these two concepts were complementary. Its aim was to reinforce ideologic attitudes in the population, in contrast to liberal democratic system of competing ideas and opinions.

Thoroughly described by Fidelius (1998), government communication flows in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic appeared in many contexts including state-controlled television, radio and the press. ‘Who communicates in the editorials of the state-controlled press to whom? The Party? The Central Committee? Or simply us?’ (Fidelius, 1998, p. 12). Official government communication was omnipresent and together with censorship of opposite views and the fight against otherness, they formed the key tools of power legitimation. The Party was obsessed by planning and invocation of ‘better tomorrows’ (Fidelius, 1998, p. 172). Many activities of numerous government sectors were heavily and permanently communicated to people, praising the working labour and highlighting numbers of agriculture and technical production (Fidelius, 1998, p. 22). We argue that this ‘push’ character of the before-1989 government communication implied problems which government communication today must deal with and which will also be analysed in this text.

When we contemplate on the state and development of government communication and the notion of power within the Czech Republic after regaining political and economic freedom, we need to highlight several key things. Rapid market transformation period had taken place in the first half of 1990s, setting the major social discourse and interests, accompanied by relatively fast Western European and Euro-Atlantic values adoption. Czech Republic, similarly to other former Soviet-bloc countries, had to learn very fast how to develop legitimate public service and create a completely new public sphere, legally underpinned by completely different processes and rules to those before 1989 (Toepfl, 2013).

Mutual relations between government organizations and private entities have been influenced by preceding decades in which the Communist party and, *de facto*, the whole state sector had had the sole oversight power above all levels of public sphere including state-controlled production, manufacturing, services, and trade. After the foundation of the sovereign state and reconstruction of power division in the society, government communication has fundamentally changed. Government had to stop the unified, unilateral communication flow. Phenomena such as deetatization of media, privatisation of media ownership, foundation of public service media, and general liberalisation of societal relations meant that government had to start competing for its attention. More stakeholders dominated the public sphere, mainly represented by foreign brands and pop-culture which expanded to promising new markets, hungry for Western cultural and market values.

The year of 1993 marks a starting point in our journey towards the reconstruction and analysis of communication practiced between two major stakeholders, i.e. government agencies and private companies, in the Czech Republic. In 1993, new Constitution Law (1/1993) came into practice and several either parallel, or logically consequent processes such as economic transformation, free speech anchoring, and general democratisation commenced. Politically, the period of 1990s was turbulent and Czechs, though motivated by sudden abundance of opportunities, had to learn that the path towards Western-style democratic state was paved by obstacles and practices such as investments fraud and corruption (Vodička and Cabada, 2007; Lovell, 2001).

Communication and media system have begun its enormous advancement and change too. Press officers were no longer mere tools of Kremlin-fuelled state propaganda. Following the ideas and societal consequences of Velvet Revolution, media system in the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic and after 1993 in the sovereign Czech Republic transformed with an aim to become the institution of free speech, public deliberation, and the space of entertainment. Media were subtracted from state control and formed a dual system of private and public ownership. Print media were the first to go under private ownership, especially of German media-houses. Two new key players, Premiéra (later named Prima) and Nova, entered the television market and we could see similar dynamics in the radio broadcasting market (Bednařík et al., 2011, p. 368-380). Together with disbanding the unilateral control of content, new business models of financing media house operations begun to evolve.

Companies began to replicate prevailingly Western types of advertising campaigns. New types of actors appeared at the media and communication market either founded by Czech entrepreneurs or expanded from prevailingly Western European countries. Among these, there were advertising agencies such as Young & Rubicam and MARK BBDO, PR agencies such as Burson-Marsteller and Pragma, agencies specialised in buying advertising space in media such as OMD and PHD, and production houses. They complemented traditional media houses of print, TV and radio broadcasting, and formed a whole new field of media and communication in the Czech Republic (Hejlova, 2015).

Government administration used to lack the knowledge how to correctly approach and build relations with private sector representatives (Potůček, 2009). Significant number of previously state-owned companies were privatised which subsequently led to many consequent investigations of both media and criminal police. If personal relationships between CEOs and politicians, or government officers are important and widely common today, it is nothing in comparison what was happening in 1990s. Relations between governments and businesses lacked professionalization and legislative background.

Nonetheless, while the Czech Republic had been moving closer to 2000s and 2010s, the situation has somewhat improved. Professionalization has meant that diverse codes of conduct and internal rules have been adopted by companies and professional associations.

The early bird development in professionalization of the industry had been formed within the Association of Public Relations Agencies of the Czech Republic founded in 1995 (Hejlova, 2015, p. 84). Concurrently, the biggest companies started hiring professional public affairs agencies and individuals, some of which later separated from APRA and founded the first Association of Public Affairs Agencies in the Czech Republic (APAA, 2012). Companies nominated their managers into chambers of commerce, joined and cooperated with CzechTrade and CzechInvest, both government agencies taking care of foreign investments happening within and targeting outside of the Czech Republic, and all has been even more tightly connected with regional country partners since having joined NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004.

Although professionalization of the government and business relations has slowly but surely started taking place in the Czech Republic, several issues that have persisted until present days of the midst of the 2010s. The most important ones are insufficient legislation, bad media image of such a relationship, public discourse and trust (Chari et al., 2010; Kollmannová & Matušková, 2014). Legal acts describing the actors, processes, context and rules in mutual interaction between state apparatus and private companies have been partly determined by EU directives and different types of legislation obligations. Some of the key ones still wait for adoption though. The most flagrant example is the Lobbying Act, but one can find several other areas which cause immature state of things such as failures in communication with stakeholders at different structural positions and process steps in ministerial work including campaigns around reforms, public consultations, and clear digital agenda principles (APAA, 2012; Office of the Government, 2013).

Journalists often bond the term ‘a lobbyist’ or ‘a business person who communicates with government’ with bribe, pressure, stealth, and roguery (Campos and Giovannoni, 2006; Groll, 2010). This means that the media do not benefit to stabilization of trust within both public institutions and big corporations. Commonly, corruption is being framed as something omnipresent, almost a cliché and a grateful phenomenon often hiding not only precise and targeted suspicion, but also general tendency towards conspiracy exploited by leaders to manipulate masses. In 2011, IPSOS, a renowned research agency conducted a survey (n=1021) in which 84 % of Czechs think that corruption level is too high in the country. Three years later, IPSOS (2014) published similar research outcomes where 78

% of Czechs did not see any major results in the government's corruption fight. In 2017, Czech ranking in the Transparency International Corruption Index (2017, n.p.) was the 42th place which had been a 10-place improvement from years 2013-2016, but still behind most of the EU countries.

1.3. *Dissertation Aims and Motivation*

All phenomena and open issues described above have neither been sufficiently solved by the actors themselves, nor by academia, because of the complexity and scope of relationships, discourses, theories, and practices. This thesis aims to move the discussion forward. By structuring and summarizing what has been theoretically researched in connection of government communication in the Czech Republic and elsewhere, by presenting a methodology that could open new research possibilities for replicating this research process in other Central and Eastern European countries, and by in-depth interviewing the actors who clash, cooperate, argue, and strive for mutual or opposite aims within business and government spheres, the aim is to better understand these complicated relationships.

Author of this thesis conducted one previous smaller-scope study focused on government communication in the Czech Republic as a part of his MA Dissertation at the University of Leeds in 2014. Its research focus was limited to years 2010 – 2013 and to two sectors: Social Care and Healthcare, and ten in-depth interviews were conducted with people from government, business, NGOs, and local administration agencies. Ultimately, there were several points resulting from the research. Key adjectives describing Czech government communication between 2010 and 2013 were 'reactive, inconsistent, and volatile' (Soukenik, 2014, p. 49). Furthermore, lack of professional civil service and politicization of government communication (Sanders and Canel, 2013, p. 305) were noted as another significant finding shaping the nature of government communication with claimed hope of interviewees that this situation would change soon with the adoption of the forthcoming Civil Service Act.

The 2014 research piece also uncovered notable discrepancies and flaws in real organizational structure and its normative perception (Soukenik, 2014). 'Responsibility, formal rules and informal habits are seen differently among positions, policy fields and even diverse types of stakeholders' (Soukenik, 2014, p. 53). The most controversial issue was

the role of the Office of the Government in government communication process, experiencing less competence and significance than needed. Last point that may be used for constructing research questions for this paper relates to malpractices in government communication expenditures and associated media portrayals of corruption, scepticism and disenchantment with politicians. The final note of the 2014 research stated:

‘In the future, subsequent research ought to focus on other constitutional units. [...] As the last general elections [...] meant significant changes in top posts including communication workers and press officers, it is possible that some of the emergent issues in this dissertation are likely to either disappear or transform into new ones. [...] Therefore, it would be vital to repeat this or related research inquiry within a few years, though in two years at the earliest due to the nature of an electoral cycle’ (Soukenik, 2014, p. 54).

Timeframe of the primary research of this thesis, i.e. the critical selection of appropriate research subjects, is thus bounded by two points in time. It starts at the beginning of the year 2015 when the new Civil Service Act came into effect. The act has at least officially changed the relationship between government officers and politicians, striving for more transparent environment within all levels of government. The fieldwork of this thesis took place in 2017. The aim was to interview primarily the people who were in C-level or executive government or business positions in 2015, 2016, or 2017. After this period, in the late 2017, research outcomes were evaluated and prepared for publishing. There were several reasons for such a procedure. It was assumed that people at top level business positions would not speak of then run projects and their testimonies could be compared with publicly accessible sources such as the news media archive, annual reports, and websites. Similarly, government officers were bound by internal institutional rules and generally would be more willing to speak about events and activities in the near past.

The author of this thesis aims not to be a moral arbitrator of how various actors behave in the system. The research purpose is to explore and uncover specific forms and representation of the relationship between top-tier government and business with looking at inherent media logic which have up to this point been understood and explained inaccurately, incompletely and analytically wrong. In other words, one of the key objectives is

to discover lowest common denominators which could consequently be applied to construct a comprehensive image of government communication in the Czech Republic in relation to its organization and specific stakeholders' perception. Importantly enough, wide-scope research on public perception is not part of this thesis due to relative financial demand which would require getting further research funding.

1.4. Research Questions

It has been outlined at the very beginning of the Introduction that government communication in the Czech Republic, especially in relation to the relations with business, i.e. big, middle, and small companies, and individuals, lacks several parameters that would describe it as professional, purposeful, and effective (Sanders and Canel, 2013, p. 281). Various stakeholders in the communication process seek their own interests, often being in serious contrast to a healthy development of relations between governments, businesses, and the public. It is not yet clear what types of communication, messages, audiences, and channels governments ought to focus on (e.g. public awareness campaigns, campaigns around reforms, permanent information delivery, stakeholder engagement in the policy process, etc.). The development since the beginning of the 1990s and in-depth exploration of the current modus operandi should thus be a major research focus area to understand these issues.

Stemming from our thematic and regional background summaries and selecting key points that could be answered by our research design, the main research question is then divided into six research sub-questions that highlight selected components of government communication and public affairs process, i.e. government communication topics, news media framing of core issues, organizational and strategy views on both government communication and public affairs fields, and stakeholder perceptions.

Because of a largely qualitative nature of this work, we did not set specific hypotheses which could be tested, however, several issues aroused from the primary source gathering. Despite undeniable technological progress in communication strategies and channels, various stakeholders seem to lack clear understanding of government communication, notwithstanding its business-focused subpart. New media fight for audiences and thus prefer sensation-seeking over precise and clear story-telling. Business approach is

arguably fragmented and represented on a scale from ignorance, through passive information absorption, to active lobbying. Governments lack financial resources, they do not actively increase their audience and information engagement, and do not fully keep up with stakeholder expectations. Furthermore, developing on most commonly recalled government information campaigns by citizens in the Kollmannová and Matušková's research (2013, n.p.), the most important government topics for citizens included sustainable energy, local agriculture, road safety, and social reforms.

Public affairs industry constitutes a bridge between governments and businesses and it has become more professionalised since 1990s. However, it seems to deal with structural issues such as regulation and bad media perception. Therefore, we set a specific research sub-question regarding this topic. Finally, we discovered in our previous research (Soukenik, 2014) that government and business stakeholders were positively expecting the adoption of the Civil Service Act in 2015, hoping that it would lead to a greater professionalism and distinction of political and expert issues, i.e. depoliticization.

RQ: 'How has government communication evolved in the Czech Republic since its establishment, and how do key government and business representatives currently perceive the mutual relationship?'

RsQ1: 'What communication topics did government agencies in the Czech Republic mainly focus on between 1993 and 2017, and what gaps can we observe?'

RsQ2: 'How is the communication between government and business sectors framed by news media and what role do news media represent in the government-business communication process in special regards to lobbying?'

RsQ3: 'What structure, organization, strategy, and tools of government communication can we observe in the Czech Republic?'

RsQ4: 'How do C-level government representatives perceive cooperation and mutual relations with C-level business representatives (and vice versa) in 2017?'

RsQ5: 'How is the public affairs field organized in the Czech Republic in 2017 and what are its main issues?'

RsQ6: ‘How did the adoption of Civil Service Act in 2015 impacted the government-business relations in the Czech Republic?’

Publication objectives behind this research project are numerous. This text aims to be useful for three types of organizational subjects, i.e. Czech and international government and public sector, business leaders (especially communication professional businessmen who participate on government campaigns), and academia in communication sciences, management, and public policy. It aspires to enrich the contemporary debate in how to address issues such as public trust in institutions, good relations between government and public, understanding of lobbying, and the role of business in affecting society.

After defending the thesis, the text will be shared among key decision makers and the C-level officials in government, business, and academia. We hope to strengthen government communication research position in the Czech Republic and Central Europe.

1.5. Theoretical Foundations: A First Overview

Government communication as an independent research area within communication science has only been properly researched since the second half of the first decade of the 21st century. Nevertheless, the ideas behind have been embedded in thoughts since ancient philosophers such as Plato or Aristotle focused on *polis* and other institutions in the Old Greece. Modern foundation of the research field however lies in interdisciplinary cross-field research of media and communication sciences, political science, public policy, and general system theory with applied knowledge of information and communication technology in late 20th century as outlined in the first section of the Introduction chapter. Going deeper to media and communication studies, there are specific sub-fields and authors who have mainly concentrated on these topics in the European perspective, i.e. strategic communication (e.g. Fredriksson and Pallas, 2016; Holtzhausen and Zerfass, 2014; Gregory, 2012; Lerbinger 2006), government communication (Sanders and Canel, 2013; Kollmannová and Matušková, 2013), public relations (e.g. Grunig and Grunig, 1989; Strömbäck and Kioussis, 2011), and public affairs (Kollmannová and Matušková, 2014; Harris and Fleisher, 2005).

Two major streams can be divided in the field of strategically-led communication, i.e. strategic communication that is more general and encompasses more stakeholder actors, and public affairs that is focused on communication of companies towards institutions such as national and local government and administration, international organizations, or judiciary. Within Czech academic context, these research streams have been deeply assessed within several past years with an emphasis on lobbying, transparency, and public trust (e.g. Kollmannová a Matušková, 2014; Millar and Köppl, 2014; Smith and Prokeš, 2013; Laboutková, Müller, and Vymětal, 2010; Laboutková & Žák, 2010; Růžička, 2006; Donath-Burson-Marsteller, 2005). In global perspective, a major Public Affairs research group was established at Boston University (Harris and Fleisher, 2005) and it has become an established research topic in the whole Europe since 2000s (Bitonti and Harris, 2016).

As shown in more detail in the Literature Review chapter, government communication as a separate phenomenon has been properly researched since 2010, indicating the explorative nature of the topic and lack of long-term studies. Only one publication that focuses solely on government communication in a global comparative perspective has been published so far (Sanders and Canel, 2013). Significant interest growth can be noticed after 2010 and in specifically in the past several years (Fredriksson and Pallas, 2016; Kocks and Raupp, 2014; Laursen a Valentini, 2014; Sanders and Canel, 2013; Liu et al., 2012; Gregory, 2012; Sanders et al., 2011; Gelders and Ihlen, 2010a; Gelders and Ihlen, 2010b; De Bussy and Kelly, 2010).

In general, all these texts note the limits of low numbers of comparative pieces assessing different regions than USA (Liu et al., 2012), Australia (De Bussy and Kelly, 2010), Canada (Howlett et al., 2010), Benelux (Gelders et al., 2007; Gelders and Ihlen, 2010), and Great Britain (Gregory, 2012). Particularly, Liu et al. (2012, s. 237) notices that the lack of examples from various countries necessary creates Anglo-Saxon and Western bias in most of the research studies. Communication and media studies have seen a significant change of research paradigm and many major contemporary research groups focus on developing countries from Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, South America, and Asia. Because this dissertation cannot contain case studies from all these regions, the decision was made to concentrate on Central and Eastern Europe, and specifically the Czech

Republic where government communication and public affairs fields have not been extensively researched until present.

1.6. Methodology and Structure of the Thesis

Before we start exploring the theoretical foundations of government communication in the Literature Review, we will briefly outline the methodology and structure of this thesis. Epistemological foundations of our methodological approach are interpretivism and pragmatism (Rorty, 1989). Ontological paradigm is anti-foundationalism (Creswell, 2009, s. 17; Cruickshank, 2003, p. 3). Furthermore, research design combines quantitative and qualitative methods with a focus on the latter which results in a more complex overview than using either quantitative or qualitative approach (Creswell et al, 2007).

Our research subjects are entities represented by people working at national level of government (ministries, Office of the Government, and selected state agencies) and selected large companies from 10 to 20 Czech TOP100 companies which acted on the Czech market between 1. 1. 2015 and 31. 12. 2017 and had a significant activity on the Czech market since 2000. Key business stakeholders for in-depth interviews are derived from statistically ranked TOP100 Czech companies who paid the biggest taxes in long-term. The assumption is that these subjects have a biggest interest in how legislature is pushed in their policy areas and in a good business environment in the Czech Republic.

Quantitative part of the research primarily utilizes the method of document analysis and frequency analysis. Qualitative part of the research is based on expert in-depth interviews with a critically selected sample of government and business executives. From each institution or company, the target person for in-depth interview was a C-level person who regularly communicated actively or passively with government or with business, i.e. CEO, Communication Director, Public Affairs Director, Government Relations Director, or any other C-level position close to government-to-business relations. Primary political entities such as the Office of the President, the Chamber of Deputies, or the Senate are only supplementary research sources. The emphasis is given to hypothetically least politicised and most professional actors who are involved in government-to-business communication process. Methodology is much further described in a separate chapter, including its limits and discussion. The aim is not to create a superficial text and, instead, to well-

cover two actor types of top government and top business leaders. If the research is successful, author will continue with ongoing research of other important actors, processes, and links of the system.

The dissertation is divided into five main chapters. Following the Introduction, Literature Review focuses on research foundations of government communication, communication between government and business sectors, and wider context deriving from public policy, political science, management, and communication theory. The third section, i.e. Methodology, contains theoretical foundations of chosen research design and methods, presentation of primary research process and experience. Fourth chapter presents research findings and connects them with theory. Finally, the Conclusion outlines methodical and practical outcomes and recommendations for both government and business sectors and uncovers paths for further academic research in this field.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review aims to deeply analyse what theoretical perspectives may benefit our understanding of how governments and businesses communicate with one another, and how news media and other stakeholders influence the process.

Following the argument that media and communication logic principally influences democratic principles and public policy (Meyer, 2002, p.5), the Literature Review deconstructs government communication and analyses it from the inner field, comparative, and related disciplinary perspectives, namely public affairs and lobbying, political communication, public policy, organizational theory, and digital governance.

Finally, we propose an original research perspective for studying contemporary government communication.

2.1. *Government Communication as a Field within Communication Studies*

‘Governments should better communicate with citizens.’ Recently, this sentence has become a popular cliché, often claimed by politicians across parties in the Czech media sphere. What does the word ‘better’ really mean there? Ubiquitous budget pressures, rising citizen expectations, general lack of interest in public affairs, and unprecedentedly rapid technological changes mean that governments that have always been arguably more rigid and slower in creating innovations than private companies need to catch up and make an extra effort to remain power holders and influencers in the social system.

Before we analyse existing academic research within government communication, we need to focus on terminology first. In the Czech context, the English term ‘government’ is most often translated to ‘vláda’, in the German analogy ‘Die Regierung’, which specifically and solely directs to the members of the Government which is the top-most Executive power within the Czech Republic. The term cannot be equated with public administration, in Czech ‘veřejná správa’, in German ‘Verwaltung’, or with other executive actors within public sector. However, government communication in the Anglo-Saxon research context generally includes all levels of executive power, including ‘prime

ministerial or presidential communication as well as mayoral or local and regional government communication' (Sanders and Canel, 2013, p. 4).

We propose the wider approach in this thesis and we mainly analyse Central Executive Branch of the Government focusing mainly on the Ministries, whilst we mention the Legislative power in certain parts of text as well. Judiciary communication is purposefully omitted in the thesis, same as supranational government structures and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), mainly because of their distinctive positions within the national and international power structures and the would-be too wide scope of this text.

It is remarkable to observe how come that government communication as a specific field of media and communication research has only attracted genuine scholarly attention since the first decade of the 21st century. If we travelled against time and discover the predecessors of government communication research, we could observe that governance types, actors, and structures had at least been studied within political science in the 20th century and had been reflected in literature, arts, and historical analyses much earlier – since the humanity began to institutionalize power ownership.

Research on institutions and organizations that consisted of a certain marketing, media, and communication perspective appeared in the middle of the 20th century. Hyman and Sheatsley (1947) claimed that interested and motivated citizens absorb more information than those who are passive and indifferent, prefer information that adheres to their attitudes, and interpret the information in different manner than other citizens. They had foretold the much later research conversation on web and digital media that took place in 2000s and 2010s with phenomena such as filter bubbles (Pariser, 2011), and rational and intuitive decision making (Kahneman, 2011). Moreover, they prepared the ground for public opinion research (see e.g. Zaller, 1992, for a detailed context). Concurrently, certain political science and economics scholars have been influenced by research paradigms of old and new institutionalism (Veblen, 1899; North, 1992), the latter of which has been the thought base of several alternative media and communication research centres, namely in Scandinavia (see the Management and Organization Chapter below).

Numerous publications on propaganda have been published since the midst of the 20th century, e.g. Bernays (1928), Fraser (1957), Jowett and O'Donnell (1986), or Bentele

(1999). Propaganda represents a further academic forerunner and a thought base of government communication research that has analysed how authoritarian regimes and their governance structures approached the public and utilised mass media for disseminating purposely crafted information that should have reinforced the public belief in the regime and citizen attitudes and behaviour. Propaganda research also preceded modern public relations research that has been closely connected with democracies and could have fully developed in the Czechoslovakia and the later Czech Republic after the fall of communism in 1989.

Global communication and media scholarship have yet seen one book dedicated to the in-depth comparative study of government communication: *Government Communication: Cases and Challenges* by Maria José Canel and Karin Sanders (2013). Before this book had been released, a few seminal books that foretold much later research pieces had been published. One of the first ever published books that seriously described and analysed governments as distinctive institutional bodies that stressed the importance of ‘processing information’ by governments was called *The Nerves of Government*, written by an American sociologist and political scientist born in Prague, Karl Deutsch, in 1963. Deutsch (1963, p.145) claimed that ‘the smaller the losses or distortions, and the less the admixture of irrelevant information (or noise), the more efficient is a given communications channel, or a given chain of command’ in public policy process (Deutsch, 1963, p.150). In other words, clarity of communication process certainly can decrease the possibility of misapprehension and deceptive information transmission.

Long after Deutsch’s book, we can track a book called ‘*Government Communication in Australia*’ edited by Sally Ann Young and released in 2007. Here, the academic journey towards uncovering government communication gets more interesting. Young (2007) constructed the book with giving space to chapters that reflect on major issues and themes of government communication including theoretical overview of the discipline, government advertising, description of key stakeholders, innovations, lobbying, citizen engagement, government-media relationship, and, ultimately the business-government communication chapter written by John Warhurst, an Emeritus Professor of Australian National University.

Explaining power influence and relationships, Warhurst (2007, p. 52) claimed that:

‘communication between business and government is a two-way process [and] the type of communications that occur include the basic exchange of information about government programmes, regulations, and business activities and a higher-level of advocacy on both sides about particular interests being represented and particular developments taking place.’

Deconstructing the quote, Warhurst introduced the base of government-business communication process. In his view, governments and businesses exchange information due to mutual interests in knowing what each actor is doing and planning, businesses must keep an eye on the public policy process and can take part in when regulations affect their operations. Young’s book, however, focused solely on Australian and the UK context and did not make any further global comparisons.

Late noughties of the 21st century brought several journal articles in the English language which specifically addressed government communication in their title, abstract or keywords (Fairbanks *et al*, 2007; Gelders *et al*, 2007; Liu and Horsley, 2007; Howlett, 2009). These papers were heralds of the upcoming years that finally moved government communication into wider scholarly interest which, regionally, mainly comprises case studies from the USA (Liu *et al*, 2012, Graham, 2014), Mexico (Leycegui, 2015), Australia (Crozier, 2007; De Bussy and Kelly, 2010), Canada (Howlett *et al*, 2010), Benelux (Gelders *et al*, 2007; Gelders and Ihlen, 2010), Netherlands (Kraaier, 2016; Jansen *et al*, 2017), Spain (Sanders and Canel, 2015), Finland (Vesa, 2015), Germany (Kocks and Raupp, 2014), the United Kingdom (Gregory, 2012), and the more specific EU organizations (Laursen and Valentini, 2014). Key journals that have given space to contributions on government communication in recent few years are *Journal of Public Affairs and Government Information Quarterly*.

In the Czech academic environment, government and institutional communication have been studied at few research centres, namely at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University, the University of Economics, and the Faculty of Social Sciences at Masaryk University in Brno. At Faculty of Social Sciences, there is a module called ‘Institutional

and Government Communication' in the compulsory curriculum for the students of Marketing Communication and Public Relations programme (Karolinka.fsv.cuni.cz, 2016).

In Poland, the major researcher of this field is Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska based at the University of Wrocław. In Slovakia, there are a few authors who focus on political communication (e.g. Samuel Brečka from Paneuropean University in Bratislava), but they have not specifically covered government communication in their theoretical and case studies. Principal Hungarian theorist who researches topics close to government communication is Gyorgy Szondi who is nonetheless based at Leeds Metropolitan University in the UK, but his work primarily lies in public diplomacy and public relations. Generally, there are only a handful of authors within the Visegrad Group countries who systematically depict government communication in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary.

Thematic research of key topics that have recurred in the journals and studies in the period before 2010 were communication strategies and case studies, and relationship building. In contrast, after 2010 and especially after 2014, major topic areas were e-Government and e-Democracy, public-private partnerships, and stakeholder engagement (Deverell et al., 2014; Kim, 2015; Ramsey, 2014). Canel and Sanders's book (2013) on government communication represents an exception because it brings all the topics together, analysing government communication from both theoretical and methodology perspectives, not omitting digital development, but ultimately focusing on communication strategies. Sanders and Canel (2013, p. 4) provided one of the first comprehensive definitions of government communication which could be understood in terms of

‘the role, practice, aims and achievements of communication as it takes place in and on behalf of public institutions whose primary end is executive in the service of a political rationale, and that are constituted based on the people's indirect or direct consent and charged to enact their will’ (Sanders and Canel, 2013, p. 4).

Government communication in its executive practice, denoting from this definition, signifies managing internal and external communication flows from, to, within, and between supranational, national, and local government agencies that directly or indirectly represent citizen consent based on election results and thus respond to public opinion

(Soukenik, 2014). Characteristics of government communication including processes, actors, power distribution, habits, and law procedures are much dependent on a political, organizational, and constitutional system of a specific country or a supranational government structure. Sanders and Canel (2013, p. 1) also claim that ‘governing involves constant exchanges of information and communication about policies, ideas and decisions between governors and governed.’ Let us now deconstruct the definition and concentrate on government communication role and organization in the societal system.

2.1.1. Government Communication Role and Organization

First and foremost, governments globally produce, approve, and deliver policies and regulations. History has seen various models of this practice, first, a one-way information flow centrally operated, steered, and controlled within authoritarian regimes, second the two-step model of communication of post-war emerging democracies mainly in the USA, Canada, Western Europe, and Commonwealth countries with an important role of free speech and media and communication pluralism secured in the constitution.

In both democratic and authoritarian systems, government communication has fulfilled two distinct purposes: to support the political and policy line of a certain government in charge of the executive system, and to inform the citizens and persuade them to reinforce or change attitudes and social behaviour in safety and education topics such as safe transport or healthy lifestyle. Acceptance of these messages from government are of course dependent on public mood, and on historic, social and political context, however, we cannot omit one or another while looking at government communication in the global perspective

The key moment that has changed the rules of the game had naturally been the proliferation of the Web and digital media technologies causing the paradigm change towards limited media effects and selective exposure of issues stakeholders are capable of absorbing (Iyengar and Bennett, 2008; Mutz and Young, 2011; Shehata and Strömbäck, 2013). Passive recipients of information have turned into co-producers of information, and the long-time working model of information creation and delivery has fundamentally changed into the polytomic, multi-nodal, and rhizomatic model in which information

flows from both official and unofficial, verified and unverified, and mainstream and alternative sources (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Margetts, 2009; Easley and Kleinberg, 2010).

Public policies are thus represented in the public space in numerous ways, framed by individual stakeholders with individual interests and opinions. Verifying facts without analysing rich data from various sources has become almost impossible. Consequently, aims and achievements of governments have had to adapt too. It is no longer merely about sending out messages, but it fundamentally comprises mutual interaction, measurement of message delivery and engagement, and citizen satisfaction research (Bishop, 2016).

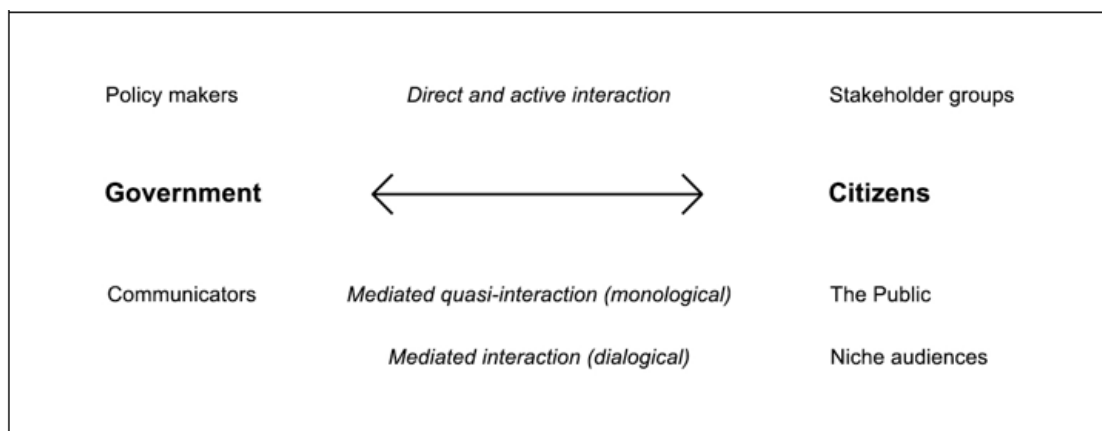


Figure 1: Basic model of government communication, source: Soukenik, 2017.

Actors who communicate with the public and with the specific stakeholders about government policies, programmes, and issues such as crises, warnings, food recalls etc., can be both government agencies and third-party agents. Policy makers are often in direct and active interaction with stakeholder groups that are interested or involved in a specific policy change. Government communicators communicate both with wide publics and with niche audiences mainly in the form of mediated interaction or mediated-quasi interaction (Soukenik, 2017). This model has been developed as a starting point for analysing government communication from stakeholder perspective and one of the key theoretical aims of this text is to build on this model, develop it, and move the discussion forward, as you can read at the end of the Literature Review Chapter.

Government communicators may reside within the organizations themselves or outside them. Two main examples of a hybrid communication system where government

information is being communicated by non-governmental actors, are the US Advertising Council (AdCouncil, 2017) and the Advertising Council Japan (2017). In both cases, NGOs communicate with publics on behalf of the government and produce information campaigns around public issues with a general aim to improve people's lives (AdCouncil, 2017). In most of the countries, government agencies and public administration offices are the key communication actors, whilst some NGOs and IGOs pick certain issues and communicate them not necessarily with or on behalf of government agencies such as Transparency International (democracy and civic education), WHO (health campaigns), or Greenpeace (environment preservation).

Organizational charts of government organizations usually comprise positions and departments that include communication or information roles. We can analyse the institutional hierarchy and relative power of communication actors, the process of creation and dissemination of information, mutual inter-department cooperation, skill-sets, know-how, and other parameters that have their theoretical background in institutional theory, and more generally in management texts that refer to or focus on communication roles (e.g. Fredriksson and Pallas, 2016; Fredriksson et al, 2013). We will further discuss the organizational aspects in latter parts of the Literature Review.

2.1.2. Comparing Government Communication

If we want to compare the performance and situation of government communication in a specific country, we first need to set parameters that summarize issues and various characteristics into a matrix, or a table. One such comparative benchmark framework was created by Sanders and Canel (2013, p. 281) at the end of their book. The framework is based on a dichotomy of tactical versus strategic approach to government communication and it categorized countries which were assessed in the study into categories of human resources (i.e. existence of special communication units, organizational charts, interdisciplinarity in a team, and existence of special trainings), government communication functions (i.e. legislation and policies), technical infrastructure (i.e. e-Government), and the process itself (i.e. strategic planning and coordination; Sanders and Canel, 2013, pp. 292-295). The authors also presented the following specific parameters which can be considered when assessing government communication (Table 1).

HUMAN RESOURCES
Number of government communicators
Spokespeoples' profile
Principal government communication structure
Professional backgrounds
Specialized training for civil servant communications
Designated chief executive spokesperson
Designated government spokesperson
FINANCIAL RESOURCES
Advertising campaigns
Other communication costs
REGULATORY AND NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK
Communication, PR, advertising legislation/policies regarding non-partisanship
Access to information/transparency legislation

Figure 2: Government communication benchmark parameters
(Sanders and Canel, 2013, p. 280)

Different framework for analysing government communication has been developed by WPP, a global communications agency holding, and specifically its sub-part called the 'WPP Government and Public Sector' practice. They conducted an unprecedentedly comprehensive research survey on international government communication practice. In January 2017, the WPP team led by Michelle Harrison released the Leaders' Report and put together inputs from expert advisory organizations and institutions such as Ad Council, National University of Singapore, Blavatnik School of Government at the University of Oxford, or the Unilever company (WPPa, 2017). The research method was qualitative, i.e. combined an online survey with more than 240 communication practitioners from 30 countries and qualitative interviews with government communication leaders from 20 countries and 5 multilateral organisations (WPPa, 2017).

The rationale of the Leaders' Report resembles the initial background provided in this work, summarized by Canel and Sanders (2013) and by Soukenik (2014). Highlighted issues which today government and public-sector struggle with are decline of trust in governments, poor understanding, under-utilization, lack of sharing international best

practices, digital transformation, prevailing reactivity, and under-investments (WPPa, 2017).

The WPP report also highlights some important figures and puts it into the context of global government leaders' opinions. Taken over from the OECD (2014) research, only 40 % of citizens worldwide trust their governments, 41 % respectively according to the Edelman Trust Barometer (2017). Deeply linked with education and digital transformation, only 31 % of research respondents claimed that citizen engagement was a priority for their government, only 14 % of them have been given any training on public engagement, and 60 % of them do not regularly 'measure the impact of communication against policy objectives' (WPP, 2017a, n.p.). The Leader's Report (WPP, 2017) confirms that in 2010s, government communication practice still did not reach maturity and thus the research team behind the report summarized the findings into the '10 requirements or attributes of high-performing government communication functions' (WPP, 2017b, n.p.) which are:

1. 'Having a clearly defined role of and structure for government communication
 2. Maintaining sufficient access to senior stakeholders in government
 3. Understanding the wider socio-economic and cultural environment
 4. Driving a focus on the citizen throughout the organisation
 5. Maintaining consistency of messages across government
 6. Upholding political neutrality and delivering impartial communication
 7. Using a wide range of data sources to inform decisions
 8. Controlling spend, with financial approval upon policy objectives
 9. Creating team cultures which incentivise innovation and collaboration
 10. Sustaining investment in talent, skills and professional development'
- (WPP, 2017b, n.p.).

In general, most of the items noted by WPP again resemble conclusions of Canel and Sanders (2013) and constitute a solid starting point for both practice enhancement and deeper understanding of what government and public sector needs to accomplish its goals in the 21st century. Concluding findings of the Leader's Report were epitomized into five areas, i.e. trust, audiences, conversation, capability, and influence. Using a different

perspective, the 10 points also indicate which social science disciplines must be taken into consideration while analysing government communication, i.e. public policy and administration (items 1, 2, 8), public affairs and public relations (items 2, 3, 4, 5), political communication (item 6), social marketing, corporate social responsibility, and management (items 8, 9, 10) and digital governance (item 7).

This decomposition approach brings similar results while looking at journal articles concerning government communication and their authors' fields. Major contributions to government communication research have had a base within communication science, particularly in public relations (e.g. Gelders and Ihlen, 2010; Fairbanks et al., 2007; Gregory, 2012; Fredriksson and Pallas, 2016). Fair amount of the articles also stems from management studies (e.g. De Bussy and Kelly, 2010; Liu et al., 2010), political science and government (e.g. Howlett, 2009; Gelders et al., 2007) and public policy (e.g. Bingham et al., 2005; Hill, 2009; Howlett, 2011). It thus seems necessary to combine at least media and communication studies, political science, and management studies to grasp the complexity of government communication and to comprehensively define it.

2.2. *Disciplinary Perspectives on Government Communication*

Different disciplines have their own theoretical foundations and methodologies. In this thesis, we primarily explore perspectives on government communication deriving from public affairs and lobbying, political communication, social marketing and CSR, public policy, management, and digital governance.

2.2.1. Public Affairs and Lobbying

Until now we have mostly been interested in how central governments communicate with their audiences. One of the main arguments of this thesis which is highlighted at several places in the text is that while uncovering government communication actors, processes, and issues, government interaction with specific target groups ought to be analysed from both perspectives, i.e. from the sender and the receiver of information. One of the key recipients of government information in the society and a major interest group that interacts and communicates with government actors is the business or private sector.

While assessing communication relations between government and business sectors, we examine the communication flow streaming from the business sector in direction to government agencies and vice versa. Such a communication process may have multiple purposes including monitoring legislative and regulatory issues that affect the respective business fields, active consultations initiated from both the government and business sectors, promoting a corporate brand and its values at important domestic and international political organization levels, and advancing corporate advocacy initiatives.

Zetter (2008, p. 71) highlights that ‘it is not possible to operate effectively or even to survive in public affairs without monitoring and intelligence’. Likewise, he emphasises the role of data inputs, reference books and opinion polls alongside with relationship management, online campaigning, and media system knowledge for public affairs work due to the necessity of delivering up-to-date and precise information to policy makers so that the two-way trust relationship could even be built. These activities and toolset which have been utilized by the business sector to approach the government form the core of what is collectively known as public affairs.

We understand the term public affairs in line with prevailing paradigms and definitions in the field, namely stemming from Harris et al. (2013), Zetter (2008), and Thomson and John (2007). Generally, public affairs can be understood as the process of monitoring, promoting, and cooperating on public policy topics and issues which a societal entity is interested in or which has a direct or indirect effect on an entity’s goals and operations (see e.g. Baysinger and Woodman, 1982, p. 27). Various other public affairs researchers highlight specific characteristics of public affairs, e.g. its management function (Henry, 2012), the strategic and power nature (Zetter, 2008), and the stakeholder importance (Heath, 2013).

If the McQuail’s communication pyramid was adapted to public affairs process, it would comprise all levels from intrapersonal communication, to interpersonal, group, institutional and societal communication, in other words, the ‘micro, meso and macro’ levels of society (McQuail et al., 2005, p. 186). Specific activities done by public affairs professionals then depend on which target groups they intend to communicate with. It is important to highlight that the target groups of public affairs professionals are political

representation (the Parliament, the Government), public administration (ministries, state authorities, regions, cities), and other social stakeholders including news media, other lobby groups, non-governmental organizations, or business counterparts.

We understand public affairs as a management function (Harris and Fleisher, 2017, p. 79) and also its multi-stakeholder character, not only focusing on government and politics, but also on society and communities. Public affairs activities concerning the government often take a form of lobbying (read below), but may include consultations, public-private partnerships, and thematic alliances, whereas its societal focus is often researched and practised under the term corporate social responsibility (read below). Let us first explain the term lobbying which is a widely understood word represented in numerous contexts and perceived differently by various stakeholders.

Lobbying

Lobbying can be perceived as the most frequent representation of public affairs activities. Based on theoretical underpinnings of public affairs, it could be argued that lobbying as an activity or a tool of influencing public policy process is a different term to public affairs, though sometimes these two terms are blurred and used interchangeably. Having a broad range of tools and tactics, public affairs professionals may not only use lobbying for causing policy change, but they can use different tactics such as monitoring the situation, running grassroots campaigns, making coalitions, and partnering with their PR counterparts to address an issue, while lobbying can be more precisely delimited.

The origins of the term 'lobbying' are most commonly dated to the early second half of the 19th century while there is a dispute whether the birthplace of the term is related to the Palace of Westminster in 1854 or to the Willard Hotel in Washington D.C. in 1860s (Zetter, 2008, p.7; Cassidy, 1999, p.8). In both places, lobbying referred to halls, lounges and vestibules also called as 'lobbies' in which advocates of various interest groups met people possessing legislative and executive power to inform them about their positions towards policies.

The academic history of the term can be tracked only a few tens of years later. Already in 1907, lobbying as a term was mentioned and described in *The American Political*

Science Review where E. Watson Keynon claimed that ‘lobbyists may attempt to influence legislation by appearing before the regular committees, by newspaper publications, and by arguments and briefs delivered to each member of the legislature’ (Keynon, 1907, p. 620).

Even though this was not yet a systematic and theoretical view on lobbying, two key types of lobbying resonated in the Keynon’s text. Firstly, the beginning and the end of the quote denote the direct communication activity between interest groups and politicians, and, secondly, the middle part – namely ‘newspaper publications’ – obviously intrinsically refer to much later models of indirect lobbying (read below) and policy communication through news media. Keynon’s (1907) early notion of two types of lobbying resembles basic communication theory approaches towards the flow of communication – either direct, from the sender to the recipient, or indirect, using variables such as third persons or media to transmit the message.

We can distinguish direct and indirect lobbying as two arms of a lobbyist’s daily practice. Direct lobbying refers to public affairs activities that most usually involve a dichotomic interaction between a government representative and a third-party sector representative (e.g. in-house public affairs professional, an agency, an NGO). Most of the researchers and practitioners agree that one of the most important tools and activities which lobbyists need is a strong contact network and know-how (e.g. Lerbinger, 2006, p.237; Zetter, 2008, p.85) no matter if lobbying is being done in-house or by an agency or professionals (Chari et al., 2010, p.3). Lerbinger (2006, p.237) states that ‘personal access to legislative and regulatory decision makers is a prerequisite for lobbying.’ In other words, lobbying ought not to be perceived as a short-term reactive tactic, but as a long-term process of creating and managing networks based on mutual trust.

Indirect lobbying, in contrast, tries to influence public policy process by inducing activity and pressure from someone else than them alone such as opinion leaders, media and, especially, ordinary people organized within citizen initiatives, protests and suggestions (Somerville, 2012). Some researchers interchange the term indirect lobbying with the term ‘grassroots’ or ‘grassroots lobbying’ meaning pressures ‘from the bottom up’ (Lerbinger, 2006, p.250). Likewise, the difference between direct and grassroots lobbying

is often denoted as ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ lobbying or tactics (Somerville, 2012, p.20). Direct and grassroots lobbying techniques can be useful in various situations and concerning different issues. In certain situation, a direct meeting between public affairs professionals and government representatives is a vital step to do, but in other cases, media coverage can significantly shape the public discourse around a policy issue, especially in the case when multi-party consent is needed, or if it is an important piece of legislation for a country’s daily operations.

Field Issues

Public affairs discipline is not in a simple situation anywhere in the world. A daily routine of public affairs professionals is to explain their work, vindicate its professional practices and society benefits since the establishment of the discipline. As Kollmannová and Matušková (2014, p. 61) summarized in the first comprehensive summary of state-of-things of the field in the Czech Republic, public affairs industry had still not been sufficiently understood by key stakeholders in public sphere. If labelled as lobbyists, public affairs actors often struggle with negative image in the eyes of media and general citizens, sometimes even from government representatives.

Researching opinions of the public affairs professionals, Kollmannová and Matušková (2014, p. 61) note that they try to avoid using the term lobbying and use public affairs instead, even though in the mostly agreed industry opinion, lobbying falls under more general practice of public affairs. Analysing various research inquiries, Millar and Köppl (2014, p.4) note that public affairs ‘may be seen as a euphemism for corruption-inspired lobbying, an artificial and confusing umbrella term or a public relations creation.’ This quotation further shows us what issues we may perceive while analysing public affairs and lobbying.

Broadly shared among public affairs scholars, lobbying is often portrayed negatively in the news media (e.g. Soukenik et al. in Bitonti and Harris, 2016). Making connotation of the term ‘lobbying’ and ‘a lobbyist’ with the names of convicted criminals or corruption leaders can be perceived as a sensation-seeking shortcut that exacerbates the lobbying perception among the public. Equating lobbying with corruption has been researched e.g. by Giovannoni (2011), Harstad and Svensson (2011), and McGrath (2008). The latest

named, Conor McGrath (2008, p. 21), deconstructed the development of lobbying in post-communist countries in the Central and Eastern Europe and in connection to the Czech Republic claimed that ‘when lobbying does receive widespread attention in the Czech Republic, it is generally because of media interest in a scandal [and] Czech lobbying and politics are very tightly intertwined’. More will be said about the lobbying in the Czech Republic in the analytical part of this thesis as this phenomenon forms one of our research questions, yet, reading through literature certainly indicates that Czech Republic is no exception in terms of how lobbying is treated and apprehended.

International organizations which focus on transparency, ethics, and corruption have recently been active in publishing frameworks and recommendations of how to cope with these issues. Firstly, in 2015, Transparency International issued a report on lobbying in which Suzanne Mulcahy (2015, p. 7) claimed that ‘the nexus between business and politics is growing ever stronger, creating serious conflicts of interest, and with it, the risk of regulatory and policy capture. Of concern is the practice of carrying out lobbying activities while holding office, as well as the postemployment revolving door between the public and the private sectors. Disproportionate and hidden political finance also plays a notable role.’ Secondly, in 2013, OECD published a paper named ‘Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying’ (OECD, 2013, n.p.). Besides general context of lobbying status quo within OECD countries, it also includes a list of 10 principles that ought to be followed while implementing a lobbying regulation and keeping its vital position in a country, both from the perspective of the government and of lobbyists.

Interestingly, the very first principle guides us that public officials cannot escape their responsibility and intently allow various stakeholders an access to participate in the process of making and monitoring public policies. Equally important, ‘a lobbyist’ and ‘lobbying’ need to be precisely defined in the legislation that fit into social, political, economic, and historic context and into current legislative framework (OECD, 2013, p. 3). However, the rest of the 10 principles highlight the role of the government and other stakeholders in increasing transparency of not only lobbying, but of the whole public sector. In other words, government officials ought to actively strive for a solid regulation of the public affairs field which as a result ought to lead towards stronger and anticipative

relations between governments and corporations and better perception of public affairs and lobbying by the media and citizens.

2.2.2. Political Communication

Political communication is a distinct field of media and communication studies that often stems from system theory perspective of looking at key public sphere actors in the form of a ‘triangular relationship between political actors, the media, and the audience’ (Brants and Voltmer, 2011, p. 4). Political communication is usually considered to be a superior structural term to government communication. Both fields share certain characteristics and commonalities, but they also differ in several key aspects. Here, it needs to be explained how the field of political communication can enrich our understanding of government communication.

Government communication strategy and tactics are usually shaped by political decisions and power holders. Even in the countries where there is a professional Civil Service, including the Czech Republic, public administration fulfils tasks that have short-term or long-term political background. Importantly, an intrinsic characteristic of a wider political communication system is detecting the presence of power, the power nodes, the mutual links, and power dissolution and balance (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995; Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer, 2010). This view has been mainly adopted by pluralists in political science and by cross-field researchers, for instance, by Kooiman (2003, p. 93) who suggested that it is important to theorize ‘interaction of state and society in general and how power or influence in such interaction is divided.’

From the perspective of electoral cycles and time, political communication distinguishes two main types of campaigns, i.e. an electoral campaign preceding the elections, most often lasting less than a year, and a permanent campaign which takes place in between elections, usually with a duration of several years, and often intermingles with the term ‘political public relations’. Electoral campaigns (as noted by e.g. Sanders and Canel, 2013, p. 2; Ormrod et al, 2013, p. 49) have been scholarly investigated since the beginning of communication research, being representations of communication power in a bounded timeframe. Electoral campaigns are usually led by political parties and candidates;

however, the valedictory government may use public administration in the months preceding the electoral campaign to present the political achievements of its governing period like in the Czech case of Mirek Topolanek in 2008 (Leinert, 2008).

The concept of permanent campaign was popularised by Sidney Blumenthal in 1980s (Hecl, 2000, p.1). Permanent campaign has been explained as blurring boundaries between governing and campaigning (Ornstein and Mann, 2000, p.219). In other words, no longer is campaigning connected only with electoral campaigning. On the contrary, according to permanent campaign arguments, politicians hire public relations specialists even in the periods that do not directly precede the elections and they continue in intensive media relations and image building following political marketing paradigm (Scammell, 2014; Lees-Marshment, 2009).

Such a practice of implementing marketing principles into the party formation and permanent campaigning has been common in the Anglo-Saxon world and, increasingly, it happens in the Czech Republic too. A flagrant example is the ANO party led by Andrej Babiš who maintained the marketing and communication team that helped succeed in 2013 elections throughout the following electoral cycle, not only supporting the party and its reputation among electorate, but also promoting the government initiatives and programmes led by ministries such as EET, the Electronic Records of Sales introduced by Ministry of Finance in 2016 (source: own research). Further Czech example of near-permanent campaigning is the recent practice of regional tours of President Zeman and also the Government which, after 2017 re-establishment and not getting the vote of confidence in the first attempt, set its meetings in regions, criticised by some as campaigning (Zizkova, 2018, n.p.).

News Media

Media and communication represent the core elements of contemporary politics and democracy. Carey (1999, p. 51) states, ‘without journalism there is no democracy, but without democracy there is no journalism either’. Strömbäck (2005, p. 342) notes that there is a ‘strong tendency in contemporary political journalism to frame politics as a strategic game, rather than as substance or issues.’ Both arguments support the thesis that media is an indispensable stakeholder in the political communication process. The

second quote also preliminarily supports our previous thinking that government communication is politicised and mediatized in the Czech Republic, in other words, media messages display and frame political realm with an aim of selling copies or advertisement space rather than substantial topics coming from public administration or bureaucracies. We shall explore this more in the analytical section of this thesis.

Media system in the Czech Republic has been categorized as North/Central European or Democratic Corporatist (Hallin and Mancini, 2004), Central (Brüggemann, 2014), European mainstream (Peruško et al., 2015), and 'Liberal Hybrid' (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015, p. 37). The last and most recent Liberal Hybrid model, Dobek-Ostrowska (2015) notes the common characteristics of the model, i.e. commercialization, tabloidization, and high democratic standards, which can still be applicable to the Czech media environment in 2017. In contrast, Dobek-Ostrowska (2015, p. 28) explicitly highlights that in countries with Liberal Hybrid model, 'political pressure has diminished in a visible way, but it is being systematically replaced by the economic environment, above all foreign ownership.' This is not true anymore in the Czech context as all major media houses are owned by Czech businessmen or companies (Hájek, 2015) and political pressures have appeared at least in a few cases concerning Andrej Babis, the Vice Prime Minister in Sobotka Government, and his instructions directed to journalists from the media house MAFRA which his company Agrofert used to own (Rohac, 2017). These facts would rather move the Czech Republic from Liberal Hybrid model closer to the 'Politicized Media' model more common for Balkan countries (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015, p. 28).

The concept that takes processes such as decentralization of publics, tabloidization, political consumerism, and disbalance of power between media and politics into the foreground has been called 'mediatization' (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999; Brants and Voltmer, 2011; Pallas et al, 2014). In short, mediatization proponents argue that media outlets are not mere mediators and transmitters of information, but they possess a bigger power in the 'third age of political communication' than before whilst some researchers even talk about the 'fourth age of political communication' (Aagard, 2016; Blumler, 2013).

According to the mediatization paradigm, media directly influence other organizations and institutional processes, and such a process can be put into context with modern public

relations practice (Blumler and Kavanagh, 1999, p. 211; Thorbjørnsrud *et al*, 2014). Especially within Nordic scholarship, we could have seen tendencies of connecting mediatization with public policy and government agencies since the midst of 2010s which again constitutes an argumentative base for analysing government communication today (e.g. Pallas *et al*, 2014; Laursen and Valentini, 2014). Mediatization of government communication may take the form of adapting messages to the use in specific news media presentation places and platforms including social media or adjusting the style and content of government messages to the *attention battleground* using plain language (e.g. in the USA) or taking part in the controversial public conversations. As Havas Annual Trends Report (2017) indicates, one of the communication tactics of 2018 may well be creating a major disruption that brings attention of the dispersed public sphere, and why not these to be disruptive actions of governments.

Besides mediatization, another important phenomenon of political communication in the 20th and 21st century is celebritization, the proliferation of popular culture into politics (Street, 2012). The most common form of celebritization is using celebrity endorsement during electoral campaigns. However, there have been cases of public information and government campaigns where celebrities starred and became ambassadors of a certain public interest topic. For instance, Jimmy Saville proposed safe driving in the UK of the 1970s and many celebrities take part in the UN initiatives and campaigns such as the #WithRefugees initiative led by UNHCR and supported by Cate Blanchett, Helen Mirren, and Desmond Tutu (Street, 2012, p. 349; UNHCR, 2016). The Czech Republic has seen at least one case of celebritization of government communication in 2007 when an actor, Jiri Labus, starred in the ‘Proti raketám’ campaign which is further mentioned in the analytical part of this thesis (Idnes.cz, 2007).

Political marketing

Before we leave the communication field for a while and we explore how political science, public policy, and management and organizations studies enrich our discussion, let us briefly outline two terms that are close to the term ‘political communication’, i.e. ‘political marketing’ and ‘political public relations’. There is no space in this study to deeply focus on these areas of communication research, but their principles and practices are

important for understanding the logic behind the decision making of both government and business actors. Marketing and public relations are viewed as separate though inherently intertwined philosophies and disciplines in this text. While talking about them in relation to politics, the literature review of the field reveals certain links to government communication though they are relatively scarce to more mainstream topics of political communication research.

As Ormrod et al (2013, p. 49-50) note, ‘current research in political marketing has its primary focus on the electoral interactions [...] governmental and parliamentary interactions play a decisive role in determining the nature and result of electoral interactions [...] and this is arguably a central topic in future political marketing research.’ This means that we should take more stakeholders into the account while researching political marketing discipline. Political parties are not purposeless entities. They represent ideologies and when elected to parliamentary structures, they form the government by their key party members, and arguably have critical impact on the communication and actions taken during the elected period within ministries and other entities of public administration.

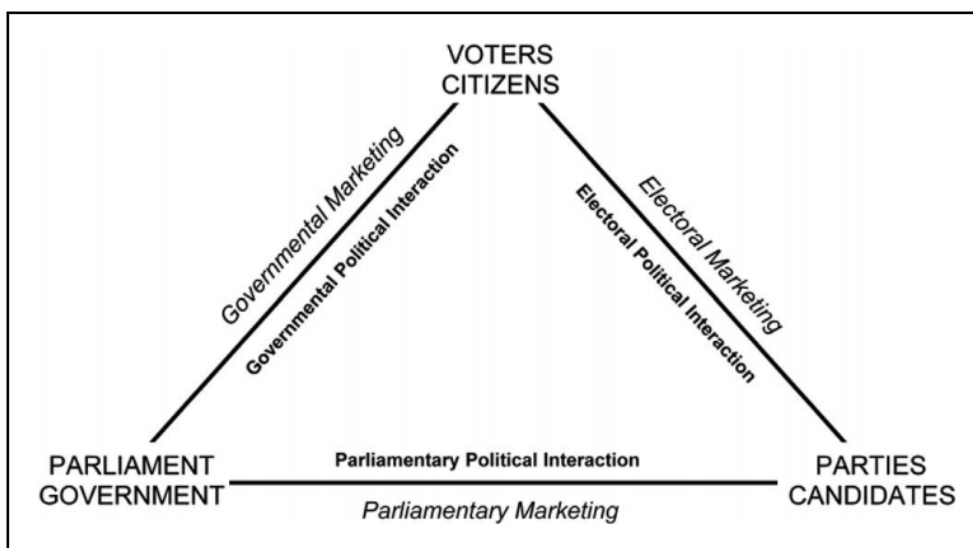


Figure 3: Triadic interaction model of political marketing, source: Ormrod et al, 2013.

Contemporary political marketing theorists usually agree that political marketing draws from commercial marketing, yet these two terms cannot be equated, and on its multi-stakeholder exchange, process, and interaction characteristics (see e.g. Ormrod et al, 2013; Maarek, 2011; Lees-Marshment, 2009). Figure 3 reveals that political marketing is

the overarching term for different types of interactions that certain authors conceptualised in the form of electoral marketing, parliamentary marketing, and governmental marketing (Ormrod et al, 2013).

At this point we need to mention Mokwa and Permut's (1981) book called 'Government marketing' which preceded the contemporary research debate, and which focused solely on the cases from the USA and Canada. One further inspirational work on government communication stemming from political marketing and political communication fields is Elder's (2016) book 'Marketing Leadership in Government'. Based on his research, Elder (2016, p. 11) proposes the 'Contemporary Governing Leaders' Communication Model' which highlights three quality characteristics of modern government communication, i.e. responsiveness, leadership, and credibility, and several communication goals of government communicators such as communicating emotional bonds between the leader and the public, strength, competence, honesty, authenticity, and relatability.

We may observe two important analogies and implications for our research. First, the triadic interaction model (Ormrod et al, 2013), the Contemporary Governing Leaders' Communication Model (Elder, 2016, p. 11), and the stakeholder model (Soukenik, 2017) denote that communication to, within, and from government and political structures is not unilateral and one-way in democratic systems. Analysing government communication inherently implies analysing multiple key stakeholder actors, i.e. primarily government agencies, the Parliament, public administration, non-governmental actors including niche audiences, and, secondarily, political parties, their candidates, and public. At the same time, we need to assess goals and purpose of communicating certain message in a certain form with proposing a certain value for both communicating sides.

Second, we can arguably perceive government communication in the wider and narrower sense. The Stakeholder Model of Government Communication (Soukenik, 2017) is the example of a narrow, more specific perspective which highlights public administration, i.e. policy makers within central and local bureaucracies, central executive government actors, and the necessity of two-way or multiple way of communication flow that refers to idealistic principles of deliberative democracy (Strömbäck, 2005). Wider definition of government communication may encompass more actors including political parties and

candidates, i.e. those who set long-term strategies and decide on legislative which has a direct influence on government communication content, and citizens in the view as voters, i.e. those who permeate in the broad government communication process as watchdogs and controllers.

Political public relations

Political communication and political marketing scholars have gradually agreed on a paradigm that we ought to perceive communication within political and public sphere as a relationship and exchange-based process (read e.g. Baines, 2011 for the context). One of the key terms of modern political communication is ‘professionalisation’ (Negrine et al, 2007). Simply explained, professionalisation of political communication is a general tendency towards more strategic than a tactical view, proliferation of commercial marketing methods and use cases into political process, and communication with stakeholders as a key priority in both daily practice and management structures of political parties, candidate teams, and public administration. Political marketing scholars also emphasise that ‘there is a definitional shift from a transaction-based approach towards relationship- and network-based approaches’ (Henneberg, 2008 in Ormrod et al, 2013, p. 13). These relationship and strategic aspects form a research paradigm that is titled ‘political public relations’ (Strömbäck and Kiouisis, 2011).

Strömbäck and Kiouisis (2011) note that if political communication research often examines contingencies and the impact of communication on politics, public relations research and practice focus on a purpose or an objective (2011, p.5). Politicians set long-term objectives and argue for a purpose to make a legislative change. Governments are directed by politicians however specific policies are then produced by a wider administration. Public relations proliferation into government structure, organization, and decision-making has been called ‘government public relations’ by some authors (e.g. Gelders et al, 2007; Lee et al, 2012; Pallas et al, 2014). Strömbäck and Kiouisis (2011, p.6) note that ‘public relations scholars seldom focus on political actors, issues, or processes.’ Putting these arguments together with conclusions made by political marketing scholars summarized above, we could claim that although public relations management is arguably more important in politics than ever and has its practical resemblance in specific areas such as

politicians' personal lives or stakeholder perception, the mutual relationship between politics, government, and public relations has not been thoroughly understood and researched yet.

Linkages between political public relations and government communication can be found primarily in the studies written by Karen Sanders and Maria José Canel. The first mentioned researcher has contributed to the Strömbäck and Kioussis study on political public relations with a chapter titled 'Political public relations and government communication' (Sanders, 2011, p. 254). Sanders (2011, p. 254) explicitly notes that 'there has been little cross-fertilization of ideas between areas such as political communication, public relations, political marketing, public affairs, and management theory, all of which are working on issues related to government communication.'

2.2.3. Social Marketing and CSR

Behaviour reinforcement or change has always been at the core of political and business thinking. Political elites want to deliver their ideas and subsequently nudge people in making decisions. Business people have used commercial communication and marketing mix to deliver ideas, services, and products (Kotler and Armstrong, 2017). Academic literature has seen a proliferation of studies that analysed applying commercial communication principles in addressing societal problems by private sector and NGOs. This phenomenon is well-spread, and it is understood by terms social marketing and corporate social responsibility, both looking at similar things with a different field perspective (Lee and Kotler, 2016).

From this thesis' point of view, social marketing and corporate social responsibility become more interesting in a connection to politics and government affairs. We could have observed a discussion on to what extent CSR emerged as a corporate response to over-regulation (Steurer, 2009), if and how CSR turns to political issues and politicians (Frynas and Stephens, 2015), and how we can understand the relationship between CSR and lobbying (Anastasiadis, 2013). However, most of these conceptual works that aspired to develop research connection between different perspectives observe predominantly the business stakeholder side. Ultimately, there have not been many texts discussing whether

government behaviour change campaigns can be understood in the prism of real social good making or improving potentially bad image linked to unpopular reforms or personal scandals.

If we connect theoretical base of preceding chapters, we may observe that the forms of political CSR might constitute a part of indirect lobbying strategy. Furthermore, if we agree on that government public relations are about improving personal and issue image, business CSR efforts may come as win-win to both government and business sectors' strategies. Third, if CSR and social marketing are about sustainability and long-term issue addressing, it complies with Sanders and Canel's view on government communication and the importance of its strategic nature (2013, p. 281). In sum, the linkage between government communication, social marketing, and CSR, is in selling ideas and behaviour characteristics to stakeholders which may result in positive and negative consequences.

2.2.4. Public Policy

The process of creating, discussing, approving, and implementing policies into legislative systems have always been key issues of interest in public administration and political science. From a certain perspective which we follow in this thesis, public administration is one of the sub-disciplines of political science (Goodin and Klingemann, 1996, p. 21). Various approaches have been developed for description and subsequent analysis of the composition, causality, and effects of public policy process. This perspective might arguably be helpful for uncovering structures, processes, and possible variety of actors in the government communication process.

One way of looking at the public policy process is from the perspective of public policy stages. This view is being taken by Hill (2009) who stems from Easton's (1965) system theory and utilises Hogwood and Gunn's (1984, cited in Hill, 2009, p.142) model of nine complex public policy stages:

1. 'Deciding to decide
2. Deciding how to decide
3. Issue definition
4. Forecasting
5. Setting objectives and priorities

6. Options analysis
7. Policy implementation
8. Monitoring and control
9. Evaluation and review
10. Policy maintenance, succession and termination'

This stage model describes the sequence of actions when any policy change is to be adopted and gives us methodological guidance for analysing the role and aims of communication within various stages of the process. A similar approach of setting stage models of public policy process was proposed by Kingdon (1995, p.2) who listed four stages:

1. 'Setting of the agenda
2. Specification of alternatives
3. Authoritative choice
4. Implementation'

Both models are useful for our analysis. Hogwood and Gunn's approach resembles strategic planning process within public relations (Gregory, 2010, p. 41), whilst Kingdon's approach refers to the institutionalised flow from setting the agenda and specification of alternatives within ministries or local agencies, through making authoritative choice by government or other public authority (Kingdon, 1995, p. 2), to the policy implementation by public or government agencies at various hierarchical levels depending on a particular issue (Hill, 2009, p.196).

Every policy stage involves different stakeholders participating in the process. Public administration officers, i.e. the bureaucracy, and political actors in the government and the parliament constitute the basic stakeholders. Citizens in democratic countries generally hold a legal right to get information about bureaucracy work. In the Czech Republic, the Free Access to Information Act, the 106/1999 Sb., is the legal norm comprising cases in which citizens may demand to get specific information and open data. Furthermore, political leaders are no experts in all field and political areas they decide on. Politicians and public administration officers need expert consultations and multiple stakeholder involvement. Business sector and non-governmental organizations thus form the crucial though indirect part of the public policy process.

Government communication is sometimes described as a ‘recursive’ process (Crozier, 2007, p. 4). According to Gelders and Ihlen (2010a, p. 61), government communication about potential policies occur when ‘government learns about citizens’ views and needs regarding a particular policy issue.’ In our view, citizens ought to be replaced more widely by stakeholders, because it depends on a specific case and field who is the impacted actor by a certain new legislature. As to the final stage of public policy process, Gelders and Ihlen (2010b, p.36) note that ‘satisfaction with the information on government policies is nevertheless one of the least studied variables in political communication.’ We could argue that in this context, there can be no satisfaction without understanding, and that there can be no understanding without communication (Soukenik, 2014).

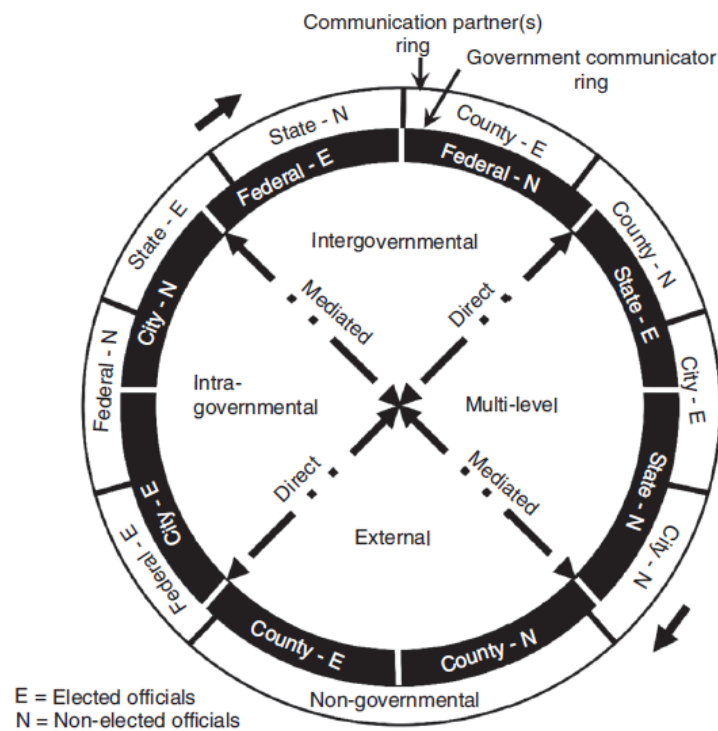


Figure 4: The expanded Government Communication Decision Wheel, source: (Liu et al, 2012, p.236).

Public policy process is neither definite nor necessarily linear. The real impact of a policy change and its evaluation refer to the last step of the process and it is often emphasised by public relations scholars not to be omitted (Gregory, 2010, p. 158). Further to the ‘recursiveness’ characteristics, Hill (2009, p. 281) adds that ‘policy process involves continual processes of adjustment.’ Making a policy change implies discovery of other issues

and policy or legislative change demands. This is exactly what Kingdon (1995, p. 87) calls the ‘garbage can theory’. It means that there is not always an intersection of politicians, policies and issues at the same time and place. Numerous intervening variables cause unpredictability and contingency in problem solving. This may often create tensions within and among government departments and other bureaucracies which ought to be responsible for a policy change creation, implementation, or surveillance.

Assessing government communication as a type of policy circle was proposed by Liu and Horsley (2007, p. 386) and further updated by Liu *et al* (2012, p. 236) as shown in the Figure 4. This government communication model consists of four interconnected environments, i.e. ‘intergovernmental, intragovernmental, multi-level and external’ (Liu *et al*, 2012, p. 223). Furthermore, there is an emphasis on two variables, namely the channel of communication, i.e. ‘mediated’ or ‘direct’ channel, and political activity of policy actors, i.e. ‘elected’ and ‘non-elected’ ones (Liu *et al*, 2012, p. 236). Although the hierarchy of different administrative levels in this model corresponds to the US constitutional system, the interdependency principle of different communication channels, elected politicians, non-elected public administration officers and stakeholders could be generally applicable with modifying specific actor and process labels and communication channel vectors in the Czech Republic.

Although most government communication scholars agree on principles of relationship making and deliberation being the key paradigm for success, principles of consensus politics within public policy process were criticised for instance by Coglianesi (2001, p.26) who concluded that seeking for agreement on adopted policies might exacerbate problems, raise financial demands and hide important issues as well as deepen conflicts. The aim should not be the ‘lowest common denominator’ noted by Coglianesi (2001, p. 31), but a real output with benefits at both sides of interests or conflicts. Thus, it could be implied that mutual communication between government and stakeholders is necessary yet demands strategic thinking and recursive evaluations from both sides.

Media and communication role in the public policy process has been researched e.g. by Kingdon (1995, p. 57) and Kooiman, 2003, p. 40) who describe the role of media logic in agenda setting of public policies. Argumentation in this analytical perspective follow two

different positions, i.e. mediatization (e.g. Brants and Voltmer, 2011, read above) and indexing theory (Bennett, 1990) that proposes that news media editorial decisions often follow a political or governing elite consensus on an issue. Contemporary debate also comprises the small-world and fifth estate arguments of how information spreads in social networks, both in offline and online sphere (Dutton, 2009).

Ultimately, the core of this debate lies again in the notion and balance of power. Czech media portray politics and may be dependent on or influenced by political decision-making as the case of Andrej Babis revealed (Rohac, 2017), although in-depth analyses have only begun to be developed (Císař and Štětka, 2016). Media and strategic communication logic, from the opposite perspective, has already been adopted by politicians, governments, and bureaucracies, despite the ongoing differences between political parties and government agencies and the level of their professionalisation (Negrine et al, 2007). As we outlined in the Introduction chapter, the societal ecosystem is polytomic and there is an ongoing battle of interests behind the communication flow and salience.

2.2.5. Management and Organizational Theory

Until now we have largely been field-bounded in communication, media, and political science scholarship, theories, and arguments. Nevertheless, following the argument that communication is one of the core functions of contemporary organizational management (e.g. Moss *et al*, 2012) we need to look at government communication and public affairs from the perspective of a third, arguably different scholarly field, i.e. management and organization. Stemming from economics and business studies, management and organization scholars research various topics, e.g. government and business structures, the issues of decision making and responsibility, communication and public affairs roles and appreciation in organizations, and bureaucratic reputation.

First, government agencies and bureaucracies argue to be ‘generally rational’ (Waeraas and Maor, 2015, p. 5). Rational decision-making ought to be based on predictability, reason- and data-based actions, corporate integrity, and accountability. However, in practice, we need to think about limitations of rationality and psychological causes of irrational decision making, collectively coined as ‘bounded rationality’ in management

studies (Simon, 1956) and closely referring to an influential stream of behavioural science applications to business and marketing practice. In other words, what Kahneman (2011) summarized as intuition and reasoning, or ‘System 1’ and ‘System 2’. Our construction of research interview templates and latter analysis has taken the limitations of rationalism into close account. Rationality also inherently links to structural logic of corporate governance. Unsurprisingly, we may observe many similarities between the structural decision making of government agencies and business corporations, yet there are several fundamental differences that involve the level of accountability, decision speed, and legal factors which indicate the scope and character of activities that government agencies need to fulfil before thinking of any innovation of its practices.

Communication role, purpose, and form in government and business organizations has recently been both performed and studied under the term ‘strategic communication’ (e.g. Holtzhausen and Zerfass, 2014). There is no unified conceptualisation of the term, yet there have been several streams of thought that developed the understanding of strategic communication in 2010s, i.e. a general field represented by scholars around EUPRERA Network such as Ansgar Zerfass and Derina Holtzhausen (2014). Besides, there is a still emerging track of a more critical approach to mainstream strategic communication scholarship, represented by e.g. Fredriksson and Pallas (2015) and Frandsen and Johansen (2013), based on organizational institutionalism arguing that strategic communication is institution-specific, and we need to perceive various aspects bounded in institutional logic different to public and private sector organizations. We believe that both sides of the debate are useful for studying communication in and between public and private sector organizations what we further show in the analytical section.

Theoretical base of analysing why and how business communicates with government organizations stems mainly from stakeholder theory in management (Freeman, 1984). It explains what kinds of actors are critical for business decision making and, in correlation, for communication. As Freeman states, stakeholders may take a form of any individuals, groups or organizations with an ability to directly or indirectly influence certain organization’s existence. Stakeholders can be external, i.e. governments, public sector, competitors, lobby groups, NGOs or media. Internal stakeholders comprise employees, shareholders, suppliers or customers (Freeman, 1984).

Stakeholder theory is applicable in both government and business structures. Coglianese (2001, p. 6) particularly mentions ‘stakeholder involvement’ as one of the common labels for ‘non-governmental actors in policy-making’. Likewise, De Bussy and Kelly (2010, p. 290) use the stakeholder salience framework which stems from the management ‘theory of stakeholder identification and salience’ for exploring the influence of interest groups on government decision making (Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 854). They all ask whether the term ‘stakeholder’ is used in politics and inherently find out that ‘stakeholding is in wide-spread use in politics and that it refers, in principle, to those with a legitimate interest or claim in a particular situation or policy decision’ (De Bussy and Kelly, 2010, p. 300).

Researching the role and position of public affairs and communication within business structures, Moss (2012, p. 50) finds out that ‘research in the [well-developed area of corporate political activity] tends to be undertaken by business/management academics, whereas public affairs research has tended to be pursued largely by political scientists.’ Moss (2012, p. 58) further notes that while analysing public affairs role in business organizations, we may focus on company’s understanding of public affairs, size and capability of the function, or experience and expertise in the teams, and he concludes that ‘the structural alignment of public affairs and other communications functions may vary from organization to organization, or even between divisions and regional operating companies within the same organization.’ It means that we ought to move to the discovery step while describing public affairs in the Czech Republic as the only study that embarks on the public affairs research in this country is Kollmannová and Matušková (2014) which does not explicitly deal with the structural and perception issues of public affairs within business organizations.

Finally, we may perceive government agencies as brands. Commercial marketing literature flagships the term ‘brand equity’ (Aaker, 1991) and literature that focuses more on the public sector operates with the term ‘bureaucratic reputation’ which can be understood as a notion which is ‘formed around stakeholder groups because of actions chosen by the organization [and derives from] social interactions between stakeholder groups’ (Waeraas and Maor, 2015, p. 3). General perception of bureaucracies and their reputation tends to be relatively negative, often connected with slow pace, distance, and ignorance (Soukenik, 2014), yet this has been changing in the Western European countries with

government actions that had to react on the stakeholder and customer-focused communication in the private sector linked to the ideas of New Public Management and even the Digital-Era Governance (Dunleavy et al., 2006).

2.2.6. Digital Governance

The emergence of the Internet and digitally-connected media has fundamentally changed the communication in all spheres of life. Actors within public sphere can communicate faster, use a plethora of formats, tools, and gadgets, and overcome issues that had been unimaginable before 1990s. Both government communication and public affairs have adopted the digital-era media and communication logic which comprise using social network platforms for stakeholder outreach and feedback, writing and disseminating documents and know-how at websites and various third-party platforms including news sites, blogs, or e-libraries. We can track several scholarly perspectives linked to digitalisation processes in government and businesses, fundamental case studies of embedding digital principles and importance in central government structures, and development of public affairs field with information technology aspects.

Western European and Anglo-Saxon governments have begun adopting business logic of flattening hierarchies, managerial leadership, increased competition, cost reduction, and disaggregation since 1980s (Dunleavy et al., 2006). In 2000s and 2010s, we could have seen an unprecedented proliferation of information technology, both software and hardware, into government and public sectors. Social networks represent only a tip of the iceberg as digitalization processes have been adopted in numerous public sectors, mostly healthcare, i.e. 'eHealth', finance, i.e. 'eTaxes', and an official communication between governments and stakeholders regarding registration, changes, requests, and permits.

In global rankings (European Commission, 2016a; Hamill, 2017), we may observe similar countries scoring high in digital governance advancement. Generally, these are the United Kingdom, Australia, South Korea, Singapore, the Nordic countries, Japan, and the Gulf countries. Specifically, the United Kingdom is setting the new field with its Government Digital Service and Government Communication Service units, directly led by the Downing Street 10, and disrupting the ways government used to communicate in the past (GCS,

2017). In the CEE, Estonia is the country which leads the horserace (Margetts and Naumann, 2017). Czech Republic, as pointed out in the Introduction, is generally catching up from lower positions in all areas of digital governance, even though it arguably has a great potential with many start-ups and emerging companies that went global come from this country such as Avast, GoodData, and Kiwi.com.

Contemporary government communication cannot be analysed without its digital aspects. By proposing using the terms of ‘Digital-Era Governance’, ‘Digital Government’, and ‘the Government as a Platform’ (Dunleavy et al., 2006; Janowski, 2015; Margetts and Naumann, 2017), currently leading academic research highlights the importance of citizen participation, data analysis and active utilisation, sharing software, and design thinking in governments and bureaucracies (Margetts and Naumann, 2017).

Government communication is increasingly shaped by the adoption of digital media and social networks logic, specifically, by the role of Twitter (Waters and Williams, 2011; Wukich and Mergel, 2015; Park et al., 2015). Twitter has become a 24/7 conversational environment where politicians, governments, companies, journalists, NGOs, and other stakeholders are closer than anywhere and anytime before. Naturally, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, or YouTube cannot be omitted from our notion, but the position of Twitter is unique, due to its adoption by opinion leaders and the potential to set media agenda (Burson-Marsteller, 2017). In the Czech Republic, most of the ministries, top executive public-sector agencies, and politicians use Twitter, because of its reach to journalists and niche stakeholder groups using Twitter on daily basis. Therefore, Twitter is arguably one of the most important environments where government communication and public affairs meet.

We may argue that owing to the Internet and digital advancement of government agencies, public affairs field becomes presumably more professional. Public affairs workers need not to rely solely on personal ties from their past affiliations and the field is more open than before. Almost every public affairs tool can utilize the Internet, i.e. monitoring of legislative changes can be done via online government platforms, stakeholder mapping can use LinkedIn and media archive, and argument preparation can be significantly easier with searching and analysing an unlimited scope of information sources.

Government organizations in the Czech Republic arguably suffer from the long centuries of Austrian-Habsburg and latter authoritarian regimes in which they were not used to the principles of stakeholder engagement, accountability, and proactivity. Furthermore, as Janssen and Van de Hoort (2016, p. 4) summarize, contemporary ‘traditional governance is often focused on ensuring stability and accountability, and dealing with repeatable issues, but gives little room for taking advantage of new developments and adapting quickly to changes in the environment.’ Notions of recursiveness, change management, and catching up with external influences shall be crucial topics discussed in the Findings.

2.3. Government Communication: A New Theoretical Model

All disciplines presented in the Chapter 2.2 contribute to the overall understanding of government communication process, but none of them give us a general perspective. The major drive behind the theoretical part of this work is to highlight the contributions of the disciplines, link them with the existing government communication field research, and to offer a new theoretical approach to research and study government communication; in the Czech Republic and potentially elsewhere.

First, existing government communication theoretical studies are often bound within specific research areas and do not use interdisciplinary bridges. Although the core theoretical and methodological background lies in media and communication studies, there are specific issues that cannot be understood without looking elsewhere. For instance, an analysis of time and context points where government communication is and should be performed is only possible by looking deeply at public policy cycle process, and on management theories of decision making and organizational logic.

Because of the competition of messages and the cost of attention in the contemporary public sphere, no government communication process can be explained without looking at marketing and public relations principles and tactics. Linking technology, politics, and society is a major research focus area of the 21st century and digitalization of government happens in real time in the whole World with some countries including the Czech Republic still lagging, while others offer working examples.

We propose an addition to the contemporary government communication theory. By implementing research thoughts from the previous paragraphs, we categorize government communication by its key performers within the Central Executive Branch focusing on who they should approach, what tools they may utilize, and why it is important for a well-rounded government communication. This corresponds to the initial part of Sanders and Canel's government communication definition, i.e. the role (stakeholders), practice (strategies, tools, actions), and aims (goals, purpose) of communication. We update the Stakeholder Model of Government Communication as follows and thus prepare an argumentative base for the Discussion and Conclusion Chapter:

	<i>Stakeholders</i>	<i>Strategies, Tools, Actions</i>	<i>Goals, Purpose</i>
Government Leadership (Ministers, Deputy Ministers & Leadership Depts., i.e. Procurement and Chief Executive Office)	<p>Internal (Intergovernmental):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Governance organizations per region / topic / importance levels ▪ Supranational Level (EU, IGOs) ▪ Expert Departments ▪ Communication Department <p>External:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Business and NGOs Leadership ▪ Academia ▪ Legislators ▪ HR & Design Thinking experts ▪ Government communication experts 	<p>Policy Stages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deciding to (and how to) decide, Setting of the Agenda <p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Approving sharing communication software (intranets, extranets) and standards ▪ Proposing design thinking in an organization <p>WPP Model Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Having a clearly defined role of and structure for government communication ▪ Sustaining investment in talent, skills and professional development ▪ Creating team cultures which incentivise innovation and collaboration <p>Communication Tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stakeholder Meetings ▪ Agile Collaborative Tools (e.g. Slack) ▪ Daily, Weekly, Monthly, and Annual Opt-In and General Cross-Government Updates ▪ Twitter, LinkedIn 	<p>Positive Stakeholder Perception</p> <p>Open and decision-focused organizational culture</p> <p>Improving the Czech Republic's position in international governance rankings</p> <p>Maintaining the Workforce</p>
Policy Makers (Expert Ministry Officers)	<p>Internal (Intergovernmental):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cross-ministerial departments per topic / region / importance levels ▪ Government Leadership ▪ Communication Department <p>External:</p>	<p>Policy stages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Issue Definition, Forecasting, Setting Objectives and Priorities, Options Analysis, Policy Implementation, Monitoring and Control, Evaluation Review, Policy Maintenance <p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data analysis and active utilization 	<p>Up-to-date legislation and policy proposals in line with global trends and current issue resolving</p> <p>Minimizing the space for corruption</p>

- Business and NGOs Leadership and Executive Level
- Academia

- Active stakeholder involvement in all policy stages (esp. business and NGOs)
- Proposing social advocacy campaigns

Open and decision-focused organizational culture
Positive Stakeholder Perception

WPP Model Actions:

- Maintaining sufficient access to senior stakeholders in government
- Controlling spend, with financial approval upon policy objectives

Communication Tools:

- Regular Stakeholder Meetings and Events
- Collaborative Platforms for Feedback
- Direct mail
- UX-focused Website (collaboration with government communicators)
- Twitter, LinkedIn
- Open Data publishing

Government Communicators
 (Spokespersons, Heads of Comms)

- Internal (Intergovernmental):**
- Office of the Government and the Government Spokesperson
 - Other Ministerial Government Communicators
 - Government Leadership
 - Expert Departments (Policy Makers)

- Policy stages:**
- Active Collaboration during all the Policy Stages, especially Forecasting, Implementation, and Monitoring

Open organizational culture
Positive Stakeholder Perception

- Strategies:**
- Proposing and executing social advocacy campaigns
 - Implementing PR principles not only to external, but also internal communication

Reliability and responsiveness culture with a focus on setting agenda rather than on reactivity

- External:**
- News Media (Editors, Sectoral Journalists, Social Media Platform Administrators of the Media Outlets)
 - Opinion makers (social media influencers, sectoral experts)
 - Academia
 - Government communication experts
 - Communication agencies and professionals

- WPP Model Actions:**
- Maintaining consistency of messages across government
 - Using a wide range of data sources to inform decisions
 - Understanding the wider socio-economic and cultural environment
 - Upholding political neutrality and delivering impartial communication

Communication Tools:

- Meetings with government communication experts
- UX-focused Website
- Active and insights-driven Social Media presence
- Press Releases through direct mail and Twitter
- Internal and External Stakeholder Events focused on Feedback Gathering and proposing Communication Innovation on Quarterly Basis

<p>All Ministry Workers (Including Support Staff)</p>	<p>Internal (Intergovernmental):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All levels of governance <p>External:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Public (visitors, eGovernment clients) ▪ All niche stakeholder groups (such as business, NGOs, news media, etc.) 	<p>WPP Model Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Driving a focus on the citizen throughout the organisation <p>Communication Tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Positive and Client-based Face-to-Face and Online Communication Style 	<p>Bureaucratic reputation</p> <p>Ministry workers as government openness ambassadors</p>
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Figure 5: Stakeholder Model of the Government Communication (the 2018 Update)
Source: my own summary of the models and theory presented in the Literature Review – mainly WPP, 2017b, n.p.; Sanders and Canel, 2013; Liu et al, 2012, p. 223; Hill, 2009; Kingdon, 1995.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research design of this thesis has been developed as a mixed design, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods. The reason is primarily the explorational nature of our research inquiry which not only combines different social science and business disciplines, i.e. communication, public policy, and management, but intrinsically also because there is a lack of benchmark studies that would prove the appropriateness of a specific research design or method. Most importantly, the methodology is derived from and builds on the research question and sub-questions, while several academic and semi-academic studies were used as a guideline for setting parameters, variables, and subjects of this study (Sanders and Canel, 2013; WPP, 2017). Following sections of the methodology chapter uncover the underlying philosophy of the chosen research design, present the research subjects and samples, and highlight possible limitations of the overall approach, while these are critically compared with its possible benefits.

3.1. *Research Design*

We shall now repeat the RQ and sub-questions so that we could elaborate on methodology in more depth.

RQ: *‘How has government communication evolved in the Czech Republic since its establishment, and how do key government and business representatives currently perceive the mutual relationship?’*

RsQ1: ‘What communication topics did government agencies in the Czech Republic mainly focus on between 1993 and 2017, and what gaps can we observe?’

RsQ2: ‘How is the communication between government and business sectors framed by news media and what role do news media represent in the government-business communication process in special regards to lobbying?’

RsQ3: ‘What structure, organization, strategy, and tools of government communication can we observe in the Czech Republic?’

RsQ4: ‘How do C-level government representatives perceive cooperation and mutual relations with C-level business representatives (and vice versa) in 2017?’

RsQ5: ‘How is the public affairs field organized in the Czech Republic in 2017 and what are its main issues?’

RsQ6: ‘How did the adoption of Civil Service Act in 2015 impacted the government-business relations in the Czech Republic?’

The main RQ indicates what parameters are important for this study. We explore bilateral interdependencies of central government agency representatives and big corporations’ representatives together with a third group of public affairs agency representatives who constitute a bridge between government and business. Actors in the process, bureaucracy routines, organizational positions, and behaviour and attitudes towards their counterparts, both within government and corporate sectors, have been explored. Overall, philosophical principles of the text are based mainly on anti-foundationalist ontology and interpretivist epistemology paradigm (Creswell, 2009, p.17; Cruickshank, 2003, p.3). This means that the core approach is to explain the reality and to present a new perspective on the nature of a specific relation type in the society.

3.2. Research Sampling

Before going more in detail about research methods, it is necessary to operationalize both government agencies and corporations in the Czech Republic, to choose which of them are more suitable for our research. Czech Central Government level is formed by the Office of the Government and 14 ministries, as to the year 2017.

Office of the Government of the Czech Republic

Ministry of Agriculture

Ministry of Culture

Ministry of Defence

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

Ministry of Finance

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Health

Ministry of Industry and Trade

Ministry of Interior
Ministry of Justice
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Ministry of Regional Development
Ministry of the Environment
Ministry of Transport

Figure 6: Central government agencies in the Czech Republic, 2017

Every central government agency has a different number of sub-agencies, established, funded, and directly or indirectly managed by these central-level agencies. These are, for instance, CzechInvest, Czech Tourism, or Czech Telecommunications Office, and many others (Statnisprava.cz, 2017). Every government agency covers a specific sector or industry segment and has its role in the system. However, not all of them are perceived to have the same importance in the political sense, and some of them overlay in terms of aims, target groups, and policy development.

In the Czech Republic, several ministries are usually perceived as ‘primary’, ‘key’, or ‘power’ agencies (Potůček, 2007, p. 273) from the perspective of governing the country and the key interests, i.e. Finance, Interior, Defence, and Foreign Affairs. However, this view changes with every individual stakeholder coming to a relationship with an agency. Primary production companies will perceive Agriculture as their key agency, similarly to the theatre sphere which is dependent on Culture. As found by Kasl-Kollmannová and Matušková (2013, n.p.), citizens perceive Health, and Labour and Social Affairs ministries as the most important sectors for them. While exploring relationships between big corporations and government agencies, we need to primarily focus on such ministries that constitute an important partner for corporations, and vice versa.

Concentrating on big corporations as the latter important research subjects in this thesis, we have set criterions to critically sample and hierarchize the relative importance of choosing a specific corporation for conducting interviews. The operationalisation process consisted of following three questions:

1. How much does a corporation pay in income taxes per year?
2. How much does a corporation add to society (CSR)?
3. How big is a corporation in terms of revenues?

Firstly, there are numerous ways how to rank corporations, for example per revenue, per net income, per paid taxes, or per CSR expenses. The third and fourth principle not only refer to a corporation's economic health and power, but also indicate how corporations benefit the society. Revenue-based ranking complements the operationalization, because there can be legal or situation-based reasons why a specific industry sector appears in a ranking.

In the Czech Republic, the most important industry sectors in terms of revenues are Automotive and Energy. Technology, IT, and Retail segments also score high in terms of the number of companies in the 100 biggest companies per revenue (CzechTOP100.cz, 2017). When searching for companies that pay most income taxes, the situation is similar – Automotive and Energy segments are represented most – with one difference, i.e. the Banking and Insurance segments score high. Furthermore, Agriculture, Technology, Telecommunications, Heavy Industry, and Healthcare companies also make in the list of the biggest tax payers which is curated by the Czech Ministry of Finance every year (Financnisprava.cz, 2016).

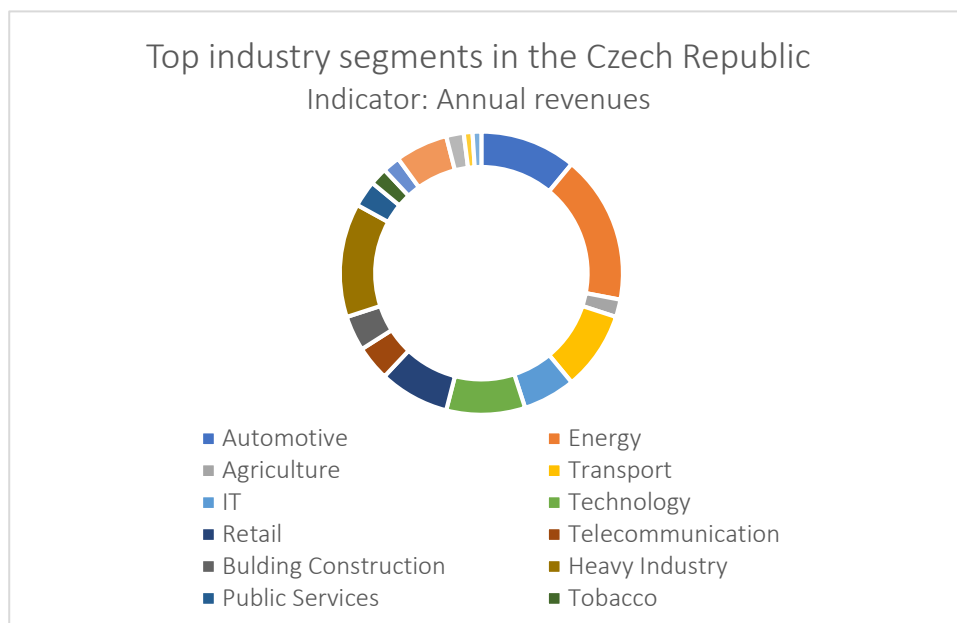


Figure 7: Top industry segments in the Czech Republic, indicated by the CzechTOP100 companies per annual revenue (CzechTOP100.cz, 2017).

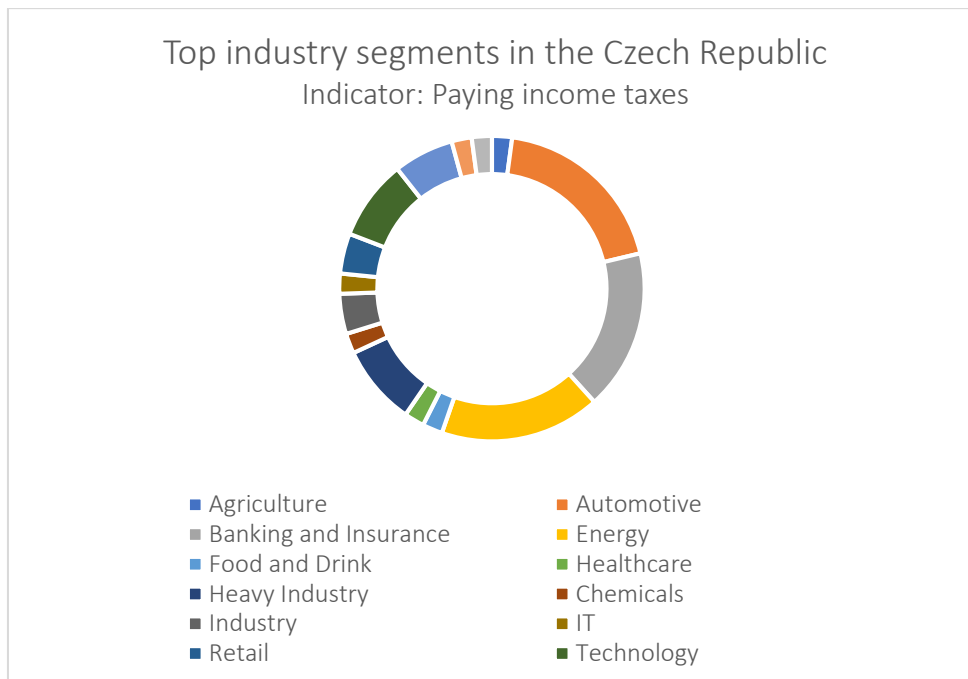


Figure 8: Top industry segments in the Czech Republic, indicated by the frequency of industries and the ranking of 80 biggest income tax payers (Financnisprava.cz, 2016).

Looking at the best CSR companies, the Business for Society, a Czech NGO focusing on CSR, annually awards companies including a category ‘big corporations’ (TopOdpovednaFirma.cz, 2016). The awarded companies can be mostly located in Banking and Insurance, Heavy Industry, Healthcare, Energy, Retail, and IT. The report also notes the government partners of the award which were the ministries of Finance, Industry and Trade, Labour and Social Affairs, and Regional Development (TopOdpovednaFirma.cz, 2016, p. 3). This data analysis and clustering uncovers that there are a few critical industry segments that dominate the public sphere and it can be suggested which government agencies are more important for researching government to business and business to government communication patterns.

Therefore, it can be claimed that companies that belong to these lists (the complete list is a part of Annex 1), have had a significant activity at Czech market during past several years and thus form a reliable research subject list (which of course takes only publicly watched companies, omitting grey and black zones), prepared for critical sampling. The underlying assumption states that these subjects have had the biggest interest in how legislature is pushed in their policy areas and how good business environment has been present in the Czech Republic. Therefore, we can see that primarily, the Ministry of Finance

and the Ministry of Industry and Trade are the key ministries important for the biggest Czech corporations in general, with, secondarily, ministries of Health and Transport cover the industry topics of most of the specific-sector biggest companies, and, thirdly, the remaining agencies only play a supporting role in this research.

3.3. *Research Methods*

The research flow of this study is composed as a logical flow and journey that collects data and combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. Research sub-questions were set followingly:

RsQ1: ‘What communication topics did government agencies in the Czech Republic mainly focus on between 1993 and 2017, and what gaps can we observe?’

RsQ2: ‘How is the communication between government and business sectors framed by news media and what role do news media represent in the government-business communication process in special regards to lobbying?’

RsQ3: ‘What structure, organization, strategy, and tools of government communication can we observe in the Czech Republic?’

RsQ4: ‘How do C-level government representatives perceive cooperation and mutual relations with C-level business representatives (and vice versa) in 2017?’

RsQ5: ‘How is the public affairs field organized in the Czech Republic in 2017 and what are its main issues?’

RsQ6: ‘How did the adoption of Civil Service Act in 2015 impacted the government-business relations in the Czech Republic?’

Mapping cases in the Czech modern and contemporary history after 1993 is vital for understanding the recent state of things after 2015. We gathered documents such as newspaper articles, reports, and datasets from government agencies that we could search through public databases, government websites and Newton tool of media analysis (Berger, 2000, p. 134). In terms of the RsQ1, the parameters were evident, i.e. what topical agenda was key for government agencies and if they communicated extensively around

it, in other words, if a campaign using specific communication channels, involving specific stakeholders, and highlighting a specific aim could be observed. The main sources for this analysis were the Newton Media Search tool, official government websites, and online archives, yet, we informally asked several experts for clarifying the facts (anonymized if not stated otherwise). The gap analysis then focuses on topics that are frequently communicated in the CEE, and secondarily, Western European and USA contexts, and the result should be a recommendation where to focus government's attention in the coming years.

The RsQ2 specifically considered media content, i.e. the major print and online dailies' coverage of most frequent and most important terms, relationships and events which comprise government communication and which reflect on government and business relationship, including lobbying, corruption, consultations, public-private partnerships, and thematic alliances between governments and corporations. Here, the time frame was not important, i.e. if an issue happened in 2015 rather than in 2016, it did not have an impact on our RsQ. The period between 2015 and 2017 was perceived as 'the presence' or 'the recent presence' and cases preceding this period, i.e. that had taken place between 1993 and 2015, are used as pointing out 'a change over time' (Berger, 2000, p. 138).

RsQ3 was answered by a combination of official government data and in-depth interviews with government agency representatives. Regarding the critically selected, semi-structured elite interviews (Creswell, 2009, p.17; Cruickshank, 2003, p.3; Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007, p.245), target persons were C-level government officers who regularly approach (or should approach) their corporate counterparts, i.e. Heads of Departments, Communication Directors, Procurement Directors, and Industry Sector Directors. Within corporations, a sample interviewee was a person who was regularly communicating with government – e.g. CEO, Communication Director, and Public Affairs or Government Relations Director. We assumed, based on the Literature and the Stakeholder Model of Government Communication, that these specific people would help answering our research questions in the most relevant way.

RsQ4, RsQ5, and RsQ6 then aspired to complete a more comprehensive picture how governments and corporations communicate with one another and how they perceive mutual relations, a necessity to communicate, key topics, or major issues.

3.4. Data Collection and Ethical Considerations

The primary data collection took place in 2017.

Interviews

The semi-structured, critically selected in-depth interviews were collected between 26 June and 14 August 2017 with a total number of 19 interviews and 647 minutes of recordings. Before having conducted the interviews, the aim had been to identify and then to inquire at least five persons from each group of interviewees, i.e. central government, large corporations, and the public affairs agencies. This objective has been successfully accomplished, with even exceeding this number within the business sector.

The most common time duration of an interview was 30-40 minutes with only one interview notably shorter and two interviews that took almost an hour. The 30-minutes format of the interviews was purposefully selected regarding previous experience of talking to C-level people who mostly only had a free time slot of 30 minutes.

The language of all interviews was Czech, so all the quotations used in this study were later translated into English for the purposes of this thesis. At the beginning of each interview, the consent form was read to the participants who subsequently verbally agreed to the rules, signed an anonymised form that has been given to the Charles University Department of Marketing Communication and Public Relations office for confidentiality and integrity guarantees.

All names of the interviewees were anonymised and coded into categories:

- Ax is a C-level Government Officer
- Bx is a CEO / Top Executive / Business person
- Cx is a Director of a Public Affairs agency

It needs to be clarified that the plan included four categories, but due to the scope of the thesis, the former D category merged with the C category. The consent forms given to the research participants comprised the four-level structure, but this had no implications.

Person	Type	Date	Duration
A1	C-level Government Officer	29 June 2017	00:29:58
A2	C-level Government Officer	11 July 2017	00:30:27
A3	C-level Government Officer	24 July 2017	00:30:19
A4	C-level Government Officer	03 August 2017	00:28:32
A5	C-level Government Officer	14 August 2017	00:28:27
B1	CEO / Top Executive / Business	26 June 2017	00:37:46
B2	CEO / Top Executive / Business	27 June 2017	00:33:56
B3	CEO / Top Executive / Business	28 June 2017	00:33:27
B4	CEO / Top Executive / Business	24 July 2017	00:59:28
B5	CEO / Top Executive / Business	25 July 2017	00:39:50
B6	CEO / Top Executive / Business	26 July 2017	00:30:04
B7	CEO / Top Executive / Business	31 July 2017	00:22:39
B8	CEO / Top Executive / Business	31 July 2017	00:33:22
B9	CEO / Top Executive / Business	03 August 2017	00:35:13
C1	Director / Public Affairs agency	11 July 2017	00:59:56
C2	Director / Public Affairs agency	12 July 2017	00:30:08
C3	Director / Public Affairs agency	14 July 2017	00:27:47
C4	Director / Public Affairs agency	08 August 2017	00:30:05
C5	Director / Public Affairs agency	08 August 2017	00:29:10

Figure 9: Interviews in detail

All interviews were organized into several thematic blocks represented by specific questions and supplementary queries which followed the line of the main RQ as well as the RsQs and additional presumptions. Full transcripts are available in the Appendices. Three versions of questionnaires were prepared for A, B, and C groups. They shared key issues but differed in certain areas that were stakeholder-specific.

At the beginning, all interviews were asked on their brief introduction and delimitation of a role, teams, experience, and skill-set. The most important part of the interviews was divided into 3 topical areas: mutual communication and perception depending on whom we asked the questions, public affairs field issues including legislation and normative

questions, and perception of government communication in general. Specific issues at the end of the interviews were the Civil Service Act and perception two years after its adoption, and discussions about the future. The sequence and importance of the questions were flexibly adapted to the specific person and the interview flow.

The Findings Chapter focuses on the experience of the participants and thematic cross-tabulation with the aim of revealing common issues, ideas, and interpretations. During interpreting the speeches ‘one must proceed with caution,’ and thus the coding process sought hidden metaphors, linking themes, controversial cases, and mutual relationships’ (Berger, 2000, p.125; Fairbanks et al., 2007, p.27).

Other research methods

Secondary analyses including the news media frequency analysis of lobbying and gathering primary research sources as described above were conducted continuously from March 2017 to October 2017. Although we did not try to encompass the widest possible media type scope, we incorporated print, online, and TV, public service and commercial media houses, and serious news and infotainment news media organizations.

The first variable we focused on in the news media frequency analysis was the number of references that comprised the word lobbying in the news articles, in contrast to the number of references where lobbying was used in the same articles either with surnames Janoušek, Rittig, or Dalík, referring to the most flagrant and notoriously known cases of people convicted for criminal activity linked with naming them as lobbyists. We used Boolean algebra for logic-based search within Newton Media Search service, combining ‘lobb*’ as reference N number of articles, ‘lobb* AND Janouš*’, ‘lobb AND Rittig*’, and ‘lobb AND Dalík*’ search terms. We also used the ‘Lobb* NOT Janouš* NOT Rittig* NOT Dalík*’ term to discover the percentage of lobbying coverage that focused on other issues and people.

The primary research period for sampling was from 2015 to 2017 and the news journals researched were Mlada Fronta DNES (print and online news), Hospodarske noviny (print and online news), Ceska Televize (news broadcasting and online news) and Nova TV

(news broadcasting and online news). Using the Newton Media Search tool, we completed the quantitative data with news media excerpts that supported our findings.

3.5. *Limits of the Research Design and Methods*

Despite the enthusiasm and desire to explore an unearthed topic resulting into many exciting conclusions, expectations from the selected research design and methods need to be realistic and achievable. One of the common mistakes during the process of designing research is sample, geographic, or time exaggeration. Naturally, to describe and analyse the relations between multiple stakeholders during several years is a large task, especially in the case when there are tens or hundreds of important interviewees and thousands of datasets.

According to Berger (2000, p.111), an interview is ‘a conversation between a researcher (someone who wishes to gain information about a subject) and an informant (someone who presumably has information of interest on the subject).’ By conducting interviews, one can go beyond facts and capture the interviewee’s experience, feelings and attitudes towards an issue, yet this might also be a limitation of reliability of an interview due to common instability of attitudes or beliefs (Weiss, 1994, p.122; Foddy, 1993, p.4). Likewise, Berger (2000, p.124) claimed that ‘people don’t always tell the truth, don’t remember things accurately, and sometimes tell you what they think you want to hear,’ which clearly is a limitation of using interviews as a method of data acquisition.

Further limitation of the chosen research methods lies in the impossibility of non-critical generalisation from interviews and inability to cover all events or issues that might be considered as important. Nevertheless, it could be claimed that Berger’s (2000, p.124) point that the high-gain status of interviews might exceed the difficulties with interpreting the data is essentially the vindication of using this research method. Similar claim: ‘we are aware too of the limitations [...] but believe the effort is worth making,’ was made by Sanders and Canel (2013, p. 11). In other words, carrying out the interviews with top officials would promise invaluable and in-depth insight information which could be linked to the experience of relevant stakeholders and thus infer yet unclear context.

Finally, we need to emphasise that we chose the research design and methods in regard to feasibility and scope setting. It would have been too expensive to run quantitative study on population, that is why we focused more on niche perspectives. Frequency analysis used to show lobbying and its media connotations does not aspire to give fundamental conclusions. Equally, the campaign overview is limited to author's searching and research skills and interviewees' willingness and ability to recall events and issues.

IV. FINDINGS

In this chapter we shall present the results of our multi-method data gathering. First, we focus on government communication development and its state of things in the Czech Republic since 1993 and on strategies, tools, actors, and processes with an emphasis on present days. Furthermore, we consider the communication relationship of the Government and Private Sector, analysing topics such as cooperation, mutual perception, or regulation. Finally, we outline a specific issue that takes place in the nexus of Government, Business, and News Media, which is negative perception of lobbying with several cases from the Czech news media.

One of the key characteristics of the Czech Government necessary to highlight first is its centralisation. All ministries and vast majority of the state administration offices are headquartered in Prague. Legislative power centres, Chamber of Deputies and Senate, are also based in Prague. The exception is Judiciary, where two most important courts, the Supreme Court of the Czech Republic and the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic, are based in Brno, the second biggest city in the Czech Republic. It indicates that most of the government communication processes also take place in Prague, not only in their material forms (e.g. buildings, visual style, citizen contact centres, stakeholder meetings etc.), but from the perspective of content creation also in the mediated forms (e.g. press releases, news media interviews, web administration, social media, OOH display ads etc.) most of which however spread easier around the whole country.

4.1. Czech Republic: Political & Policy Milestones

The first fifteen years of the sovereign Czech Republic (1993-2008) were saturated with major domestic politics and policy programmes, from the introduction and convertibility of the new Czech Koruna between 1993 and 1995, through major phases of privatization in the first half of 1990s, political crises and recession answers in the late 1990s such as 'Čisté ruce' anti-corruption programme, or 'Úsporné balíčky' austerity measures, to the second phase of privatization of banking, energy, and industry conglomerates in the early 2000s (see Figure 9). This period was also characterised by preparation actions for entering supranational and international organizations. The Czech Republic entered NATO in

1999, the EU in 2004, and Schengen area in 2007. Furthermore, the 2000s were politically marked by social, health, and economic reforms.

The beginning of 2010s dealt with recession fight and political instability that ended in 2013 with the fall of Necas Government and early elections. The further period of 2013-2017 was politically more stable and benefitted from the Regional, especially German, economic growth. Despite the political crisis at the end of the government period due to the accusations of Andrej Babiš, then Minister of Finance, of misusing the EU funds while building the Čapí Hnízdo farm, the Government did not fall which could be denoted as an exception in the modern Czech political history. From the macroeconomic perspective, the years of 2015-2017, our main research focus, can be generally described as stable and enabling economic growth compared to previous years.

Year	Key Government programmes, actions, or initiatives after 1993 (especially in Finance, Industry and Trade, Health, Transport)
1993	Czech Republic and Slovak Republic formed 1 January
	Czechoslovak Koruna currency split into CZK and Sk
	Free Trade Agreement between the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary
	Value-added tax introduced
1994	2 nd phase of the voucher privatization
1995	Highway and Primary A' Roads' fees introduced
	Czech Republic enters OECD
	CZK currency became convertible
1997	'Úsporné balíčky' [Austerity measures] introduced as a recession reaction
1998	'Čisté ruce' [Clean Hands] anti-corruption programme introduced
1999	Czech Republic enters NATO
	Temelin Nuclear Plant expansion plan introduced and led by Miroslav Grégr, a former Trade and Industry Minister in charge
	Restructuralisation of state companies plan introduced as the recession reaction
1999/2000	State stakes in biggest banks (Ceska Sporitelna, CSOB) sold to private companies
2000	IMF and World Bank Summit in Prague
2003	Referendum about Czech Republic entrance to the EU
	Public Finance Reform led by Ministry of Finance
2004	Privatisation of UNIPETROL, as a key energy conglomerate in the Czech Republic finalised by the Government
	State Employment Policy Strategy Plan introduced

	State Energy Policy Strategy Plan introduced
2005	State Transport Policy Strategy Plan introduced
2007	First period of EU structural funding started (2007-2013)
	Czech Republic enters Schengen Area
2008	New Public Finance Reform introduced
	Medical fees-for-services came into practice
	Czech POINT project launched
2009	Czech Republic heading the Council of the EU
	Anti-Crisis plan towards financial stabilisation together with NERV (National Economic Council of the Government) introduced
	State Sustainable Development Policy Strategy Plan introduced
	Data Boxes project launched
2010	Tax Reform introduced
	Unified Contact Place to the Czech Government introduced
	Ministry of Health aimed by the grassroots campaign ‘Děkujeme, odcházíme’ [Thank you, we are leaving] led by Czech doctors
2012	Church Restitutions confirmed by the legislative process
	Methanol Scandal followed by the prohibition
	Pension Reform launched
2014	The new Civil Code came into practice
2015	Civil Service Act came into practice
2016	EET – Electronic Records of Sales introduced by Ministry of Finance

Figure 10: Sources: Kopeček, 2015; Berounský, 2013; own research

In 1990s and the first half of 2000s, it was not usual that government programmes were supported by external experts, deriving from what can be publicly found. There were some exceptions though as for instance Prague’s IMF Summit in 2000 was PR-supported by AMI Communications (Kurzy.cz, 2000, n.p.). We can observe the first real signs of marketing communication-driven campaigns and professional campaign execution in the mid and late-2000s. The change was mainly induced by major international events and actions with an impact on Czech geopolitical affiliation, i.e. the referendum on the Czech Republic entrance to the EU, starting to receive structural funds from the EU budget, and the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU (see Figure 10). Not to omit, special category of external promotional activities of the Czech Republic were EXPO, the World Fairs, in Hannover, Nagoya, Shanghai and Milano.

Several social advocacy and policy-driven campaigns became a nationally discussed topic that far exceeded the time-bounded campaigns themselves, i.e. ‘Nemyslíš-zaplatíš’ in 2008 and ‘Zelená úsporám’ in 2009 (continuing to the present days). We cannot observe numerous parallels and links between major government actions, programmes (Figure 10) and campaigns (Figure 11) though. Analysing modern Czech history, major policy initiatives and plans, and major legislative frameworks, it seems that campaigns were executed mostly around not time-bounded problems, rather than key policy actions.

4.2. Government Communication 1993-2000:

Hope and Disillusionment

The first 10 years in the Czech Republic (1993-2003) did not produce communication activities or campaigns that could be denoted as government communication campaigns as understood by contemporary measures. The policy events structured in the Figure 10 were communicated to the public, but in a chaotic way, mainly through mass media and primarily as a final summary of a certain action. Journalists, politicians, and virtually everyone were checking what was possible and impossible. Journalist standards were formed as media houses became politically independent and acquired by foreign corporations, especially from Germany.

Czech Press Agency, Czech Television and Czech Radio, the pivotal state-governed actors on the media market also learned how to build their societal position, to join international professional community, and to set and maintain ethical standards. Legislative framework was set in the first years of 1990s and continually amplified. Corporations started to think in a competitive way, producing advertising spots which slowly but surely became parts of more complex communication strategies. Government agencies, in contrast, did not extremely professionalised in their communication practices, also because the considerable lack of attention and pressure from citizens which was aimed more at political game or private sector.

The first important government-business programme that took place in the first half of 1990s was privatisation of previously state-owned enterprises. In the Czech Republic, this programme was called the ‘voucher or coupon privatization’ because of the necessity of boosting private ownership done by issuing paper vouchers enabling citizens to buy

shares in newly established enterprises. Many of the most successful Czech businessmen gained their wealth in these systems, running funds that managed the process and persuading common people to trust them with investing on behalf of them such as PPF and Petr Kellner. However, many issues and scandals accompanied the privatization with several big frauds represented e.g. by Viktor Kožený and the Trend fund which was tunnelled by him and his partners. This was a major moment that is often putting into context with low trust in government-business interactions in the Czech Republic and flagrant criminal cases with consequences until today.

The voucher privatization was the major booster of Czech advertising market (Krupka, 2012, p. 110). Campaigns promoting the individual funds were performed by the first professionals within the Czech communication market, namely Mark BBDO with Marek Šebesták, Leo Burnett with Josef Havelka, and Dorland with Jiří Dřížhal. Nevertheless, we cannot perceive them as government campaigns. They were run by private sector with different principles of operation, not using direct government budgets, and they were not promoting any state institution or agency. When thinking about government-business communication, we cannot omit it though as it set ground for future advancement of the communication market in the Czech Republic.

Privatization was not only the major communication topic in the 1990s society, but it also predominantly determined the ministerial agenda. Ministry of Trade and Investment was to invite foreign investors. Ministry of Finance was fully focused on transformation and stabilization of banking sector. There were no funds or thoughts for building on pre-1989 social advocacy campaigns in 1990s and most of the 2000s (Kopecký, 2018). Pre-1989 state officers also abandoned their positions within the state administration, because the state could not compete in salaries with the private sector, especially the foreign companies entering the Czech market.

Finally, the major geopolitical event at the end of this period was entering the NATO in 1999. There was no referendum or a major public consultation to this issue. Interestingly, according to STEM research agency (2015), in 1990s, Czechs considered entering the EU as more important than entering the NATO. This trend gradually changed throughout 2000s and 2010s with more and more Czechs stating otherwise.

4.3. **Government Communication after 2000: Evolution of Modern Strategic Planning**

Professional government communication in democratic countries is often characterised as strategic (van Ruler, 2018, p. 370). However, one of the big questions is whether we can link the strategic character of communication with modern campaigning in democracies or compare it with totalitarian and authoritarian regimes' use of communication. Can we even say that propaganda under the authoritarian regime was not strategic? Comparing the character of 'strategy' in democratic and authoritarian regimes is not specifically addressed in this thesis, but we would like to invoke necessary future research discussions on this topic. In this thesis, we are interested in strategic planning in the form of marketing- and marketing communication-oriented perspectives in democratic regimes and not focusing very much on the pre-1989 era.

Year	Key Government communication actions or campaigns aimed at citizens after 2000	Topic
2003	Pre-EU referendum campaign	International
2007	'Proti raketám' campaign [Counter Missiles]	Defence
	'Neboj se říct to za ni' [Don't be afraid to speak for her], anti-human-trafficking campaign	Social Affairs
2008	'Podpora spotřeby biopotravin a ekologického zemědělství' [Support of Organic Food and Ecological Agriculture] including 'Klasa' and 'Ryba domácí' campaigns	Agriculture
	Anti-over-usage of antibiotics campaign	Health
	'Nemyslíš-zaplatíš' [If you don't think, you will pay for it] campaign, safe driving	Transport
	Preceding the Czech presidency of the EU domestic campaign	International
	'Vláda pro vás': presenting what Topolánek government has achieved	Domestic
	Presidency of the Council of the EU campaign	International
2009	'Zelená úsporám' campaign [Greenlight to the savings], subsidies aimed at energy savings and the expansion of renewable energy	Energy
	Datové schránky [Data Boxes], promoting eGovernment	Interior
2010	'Vyměňte si řidičák' campaign [Change your driving license]	Social Affairs
2011	'Tady se nedotýkej' campaign [Don't touch here], sexual abuse of children prevention	Social Affairs
2012	'Topit správně' campaign [Stoke correctly],	Energy
	'Jednej rychle' campaign, heart attack prevention and quick first aid	Health

	Pension Reform – Second Pillar campaign	Social Affairs
	‘Potraviny na pranýři’ website [Food Pillory] launched, poor quality food	Agriculture
	‘Regionální potravina’, emphasising local agriculture and food production	Agriculture
2013	‘Česko, země příběhů’ [Czech Republic, the Land of Stories], tourism campaign aimed at both domestic and international incoming tourists	International
2014	Bezrakoviny.cz, cancer prevention	Health
2015	‘Vidíme se?’ campaign [Can we see each other?], safe walking in the dark	Transport
	‘Právo na dětství’ campaign [The right to have a childhood], children rights	Social Affairs
2016	‘Ochránce spotřebitele’ campaign [The consumer protector]	Finance
	‘Solme s rozumem’ campaign [Use salt wisely]	Health
	‘Věštkyňe’ campaign [The Prophetess], Czech food support	Agriculture
2016	EET – Electronic Records of Sales campaign	Finance
2017	‘To je rovnost!’ campaign [This is equality!], equal gender opportunities	Social Affairs
2017	Food standards and Food Quality – double-standards in quality compared to Western Europe, www.akademickvality.cz	Agriculture

Figure 11: Sources: Kollmannová and Matušková, 2013; own research

According to author’s research, after the 1990 that were still about the transition and post-transition thinking, process and institution building, we can observe the beginning of real strategic government communication planning in the modern Czech Republic in 2003 in which the EU referendum campaign took place. In its review, Adamcová (2005, p.33) highlights conscious strategic planning of the campaign inspired in modern marketing research and practice. The campaign targeted specific segments of citizens (housewives, pensioners) and put an emphasis on the referendum date so that people would not forget coming to vote. Considering the absence of previous examples of wide government campaigns, its result (77 % citizens voted to join the EU) and the support of not only media, but also corporate partners from banking, media, and telecommunications industry (see Figure 12; Česká pojišťovna, Český Telecom, Frekvence 1), Eurotel, Oskar and T-Mobile), this campaign fulfilled its aims and outran time. More pictures can be found in the Appendix 3.



Figure 12: Pre-EU referendum campaign, source: Adamcová, 2005

The willingness and the necessity to communicate had to be pushed by external factors, especially by the European Union that had had set standards which candidate countries such as the 1990s' Czech Republic needed to incorporate to their legislature. In 1999, one of the key bills, i.e. the 106/1999 Sb., Free Access to Information Act, was approved by the Parliament. It is this piece of legislation that has since been most associated with communicating with government from the position of a common Czech person. However, from the point of symmetry and power, the process is based on a request that needs to be answered by a public administration agency. In other words, it is a formalised procedure that is reactive and solicited. The agencies are bound by law to process requests, but usually they do not strategically work with the topics received from the citizens and stakeholders. In some cases, agencies and cities post a FAQ page to their website, but there have been no observable efforts to use feedback to analyse data, make predictions and forestall the repeated requests and make a campaign around such a topic.

From the thematic perspective, Figure 11 uncovers several common patterns in which sectors were more active in visible communication campaigns than others. The most common topics were Agriculture, Health, Transport, and Social Affairs including Human and especially Children Safety, and Equality. Interestingly, we could have seen several International-aimed campaigns, in 2000s mainly around the EU topics, later focusing on Czech public diplomacy and country branding.

In later 2000s we could have seen several visible communication activities that were directly managed by the Czech Government, namely *Proti raketám*, *Nemyslíš-Zaplatíš*, *Klasa*, *Ryba domácí*, and *Zelená úsporám* (see Figure 10). The first mentioned communication campaign was named *Proti raketám* (Counter missiles) and it was led by the Office of the Government due to a public disapproval of building the new US counter-missiles army base in the Czech Republic, which was supported by Russia and pro-Russian interest groups. The Office of the Government hired AMI Communications, a professional PR agency, and Tomáš Klvaňa, a media and politics expert, for managing the campaign. Compared to the EU accession campaign, the *Proti Raketám* campaign did not result in a definite business, policy or attitude change. The USA finally did not build the base in the Czech Republic due to political reasons and upcoming recession. In 2016 they started to build the base in Poland (Denik.cz, 2007). Interestingly enough, *Proti Raketám* was one of the few government campaigns, together with EU pre-accession and EU presidency campaigns, with political aims and interests. The majority of government campaigns addressed societal issues.

The end of 2000s was full of rapid digital advancement, not only in commercial, but also in government areas. First social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter became a common part of everyday life and government institutions had to adapt to digital logics. The Czech Government launched several pivotal projects focused on electronization of public administration, namely *CzechPoint* and *Data Boxes*. The latter project gained negative publicity and perception due to the accusations of overpricing and malfunctioning. Own research of the author showed that knowledge of the project was generally good, but the Government failed in explaining the benefits and real aims of the project which resulted in bad attitudes towards the electronization of Czech Government in general, from the perspective of the public, government officers, and politicians. Previously mentioned low position in DESI ranking may have its ground in the *Data Boxes* and first, wrongly managed eGovernment projects in the Czech Republic (Soukenik, 2012).

pensions. Instead of 0.5 million Czechs taking part in the Second Pillar which was the campaign objective, only 74.500 Czechs did so. Despite of using a broad range of communication tools, the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the Office of the Government, i.e. the campaign management, were not successful in explaining the real advantages and benefits for citizens who would take part in the Second Pillar (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2013).

Figure 14: Website Screenshot of Pension Reform Campaign, source: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2013

In 2013, the new Government represented by ČSSD, ANO, and KDU-ČSL was formed. Besides the Agriculture, Health, Transport, and Social Affairs topics which still prevailed in the public space, there were three campaigns that we need to highlight. First, in 2013, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs together with other units of central and local administration launched the ‘Česko, země příběhů’ campaign [Czech Republic: Land of Stories] aimed at both domestic and foreign tourists coming for a visit. We believe that even though this is a different type of government campaigning, often understood and research under public diplomacy and nation branding themes, we should not omit this topic when thinking of government communication. Compared to previous attempts to create a brand name, story, and design for the Czech Republic as a tourist or investment destinations which were often inconsistent and poorly processed (Chamber of Deputies CZ, 2012), the 2013 communication campaign comprised government management at

central and local levels, formally professional visuals, and strong storyline (Kučerová, 2013).



Figure 15: Logo of the Land of Stories campaign, source: Facebook.com, 2017

The 2013-2017 Sobotka-led Government and specifically Ministry of Finance then led by Andrej Babiš conducted one major communication campaign that promoted the Electronic Evidence of Sales (EET). It cost nearly 30 million CZK and comprised press relations, TV and online ads, advertorials, and related activities such as the bill lottery prepared for 2017. Ministry of Finance led this campaign together with agencies such as McCann Erickson and PHD, and hired Marek Hlavica, the manager of Prague International Advertising Festival for public relations (eTrzby.cz, 2016; Czech Television, 2016; Echo24.cz, 2015). Although the campaign was led by the government administration, communication people from ANO party cooperated intensively with the Ministry, making the campaign politicised (Neovlivni.cz, 2016a). In 2017 it is too early to evaluate the campaign efficiency, but some journalists have gradually begun arguing that EET did not bring much to the state budget (iRozhlas.cz, 2017).

In 2016, there has been a major update of the 106/1999 Sb. Free Access to Information Act, which incorporated open data into the Czech legislation. Open data is a phenomenon

of providing better access to information, experiencing a fresh attention restart when Internet was founded and developed throughout 1990s and 2000s, and finally becoming a considerable topic for governments around the globe especially in the mid-2010s. Not only the codification of open data increases transparency of state actors, but it also extends the range and type of information citizens can request from governments. In December 2016, Czech Office of the Government (2016, n.p.) issued an executive order with a list of information that is compulsory to be published as open data, e.g. public transport timetables, public procurement, or job vacancies. This can fundamentally help private companies use public and open-source data to deliver better value to citizens by building new mobile apps or integrated systems.

Looking at Figure 11 and most notable government campaigns in the Czech modern history, we can observe several patterns. Firstly, some topics prevail, and some ministries have run campaigns more successfully than the others. The most frequent areas of policy that consist of strategic communication initiatives have been transport, health, agriculture, human rights, and environment. Specific topics then comprise e.g. disease prevention, food safety, children rights, and safe driving. Alongside, structural reforms in taxes, social and welfare system, and health form a separate chapter. Government campaigns and government communication cooperation with private companies in the areas of Transport and Health shall be further explored in the following sub-sections.

Transport

Ministry of Transport has been one of the leaders of government campaigning. Its specific public awareness department called BESIP existed even before 1989. Communicating topics such as safety while driving, safe walking in the dark, and early driving licence replacement, the most important campaign led by BESIP in 2010s, was undeniably ‘Nemyslíš-zaplatíš’. This state-wide campaign which focused on safe driving used controversial and raw visuals to primarily warn young drivers below 25 years old and decrease the death toll within the accidents. In Kollmannová and Matušková’s (2013) research, the Nemyslíš-zaplatíš campaign was recalled by two-thirds of respondents, the most compared to the other campaigns.

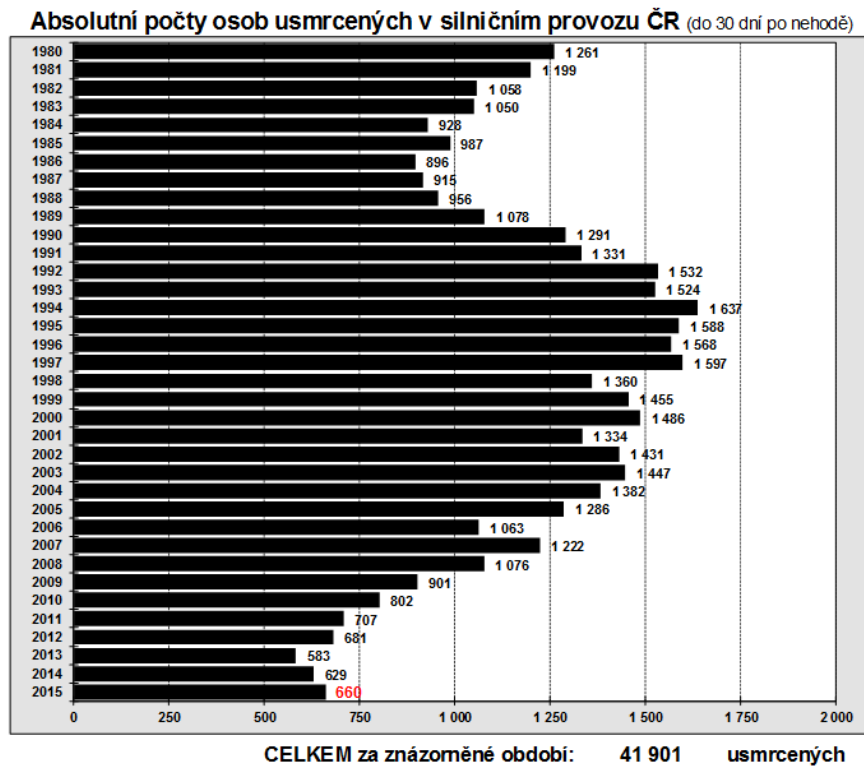


Figure 16: Statistics of death toll car accidents in the modern Czech Republic until 2015 (Automotive Industry Association of the Czech Republic, 2015, n.p.)

Figure 17 shows the decrease in the number of death toll car accidents from 2008 when ‘Nemyslíš-zaplatíš’ was launched which might indicate its efficiency in transmitting the key message. In the mid-2010s, the number has begun to climb up again, but no new significant and state-wide campaigns were launched to answer this issue. As to the most recent Transport’s campaigns such as ‘Vidíme se?’ which educates people to wear safety features and be careful during night walking, they use a combination of web, social media, event partnerships, and fieldwork. Overall, transport and traffic topics form the base of Czech government campaigns because of their common awareness and solid execution.



Figure 17: ‘Nemyslíš-zaplatíš’ campaign poster, source: *iBesip.cz*, 2017, n.p.

When searching for government and business interactions in this field, the task becomes less obvious, yet, we can observe the cooperation in many forms. First obvious means of cooperation would be corporate social responsibility related projects. Second type is government procurement for communication services. In the case of ‘Nemyslíš-zaplatíš’, the campaign was created by EURO RSCG communication agency (Havas Worldwide Prague as on today), it was broadcasted in privately owned televisions, i.e. Nova and Prima, and the Ministry signed the biggest media contract to date with Ringier media house (Grieslerová, 2010, p. 46). Ministry of Transport has also served as the official consultant and expert guarantor of projects directed by private companies aimed at transport education. An example is www.skodahrou.cz, a ŠKODA AUTO microsite designed for children and accident prevention (*iBESIP.cz*, 2008, p.19).

One recent example is the cooperation in promoting electromobility between Ministry of Transport and ČEZ, the semi-state-owned biggest energy corporation in the Czech Republic. In 2016, the Ministry received three electric cars to drive with from ČEZ. These cars are a part of ČEZ’s project /E/Mobilita www.elektromobilita.cz that involves primarily operation of superchargers for electric cars and solutions for home charging and comprises numerous partner stakeholders that jointly communicate with public such as automotive companies, e.g. ŠKODA AUTO, Hyundai, Peugeot, and others, infrastructure

owners, e.g. McDonalds, Kaufland, or Burger King, and other public sector institutions and cities (Elektromobilita.cz, 2017, n.p.).

Health

Informing about health topics is one of the very most common examples of government awareness campaigns notwithstanding a region or a country. Tackling public health, health policy, and disease control is usually considered as the primary topic of every political representation, of international organizations such as WHO or Red Cross, and, obviously, of citizens themselves. It is no surprise that Czech government campaigns led by the Ministry of Health have long covered issues that have been heavily discussed among global leaders such as antibiotics resistance, first aid (heart attacks), and cancer prevention during past several decades.

In the Czech Republic, we could notice a few government health campaigns such as ‘Jednej rychle’ [Act quickly] in 2012 aimed at enhancing awareness and nudging people to help the others when they encounter a crisis (e.g. a heart attack). Two years later, ‘Bez Rakoviny’ [Without Cancer] campaign was developed by the Ministry of Health and Ogilvy & Mather agency. It prompted the public to attend prevention screenings of cancer with famous actors ‘writing messages’ to their loved ones. The campaign used various media types including the ‘big’ formats of TV spots and OOH print. In this respect, it recalled ‘Nemyslíš-zaplatíš’ and other wide-scope and large budget campaigns from other policy areas, i.e. ‘Zelená úsporám’ and ‘Czech Republic – Land of Stories’. Looking at the project partners, besides the obvious collaboration of Ogilvy and Mather and Ministry of Health, we can see all health insurance companies alongside a few NGOs and even one private company, i.e. Student Agency, listed at the webpage.



Figure 18: A visual poster from the Bez Rakoviny campaign (Mediaguru.cz, 2014, n.p.)

Connotations of government communication and health policy are mainly connected with reforms and political struggles in the Czech Republic. Namely, the introduction of medical fees-for-services in 2008 was a key event that not only became the major topic of Social Democrats, a major left-wing party, in the election campaigns in 2010 and 2013, but also sparked the public debate and it may be considered as one of the main communication topics when discussing health policy and communication today. The medical fees-for-services were repealed by the Sobotka's Government in 2014. Typically for politically-centred government communication, we may compare two press releases, first from 2009 and second from 2014. There is a clear distinction in communication content and tonality, in accordance with a present political power at the ministry (MZCR.cz, 2009; MZCR.cz, 2014). The first release is strongly backing the policy, the latter is more neutral, interestingly being issued in the year of the approval of the Civil Service Act which aim was to introduce a clearer distinction of politics and long-term state policy.

Communication is not only about planned campaigns. One of the basic forms of public relations work is also identifying issues and responding to crises. The Czech Republic went through one serious health crisis in 2012 when methanol bootleg alcohol caused death of almost 50 people. Czech Ministry of Health together with other government units including the Police reacted fast, primarily in the form of prohibition, and Hájek (2014) uncovered that out that the lack of the communication plan and a limited usage of wider communication channels including social media were major factors why not to assess the crisis communication as fully successful, although the police has soon identified the

source of the methanol production, victims appeared several months after the end of intensive communication about the topic (Hájek, 2014, p. 30).

To conclude the chapter, Transport and Health sectors need to be brought in spotlight of government communication research in the Czech Republic due to several reasons. We have shown that most notable campaigns and most frequent topics of overall Czech government communication have been produced from these sectors. Automotive and Medical/Pharmaceutical fields constitute a considerable part of the biggest corporations in the Czech Republic. Health is the most demanding topic from the perspective of citizens (Kollmannová and Matušková, 2014, n.p.) and the issue of highway and road development have been among most popular topics of governments and were even called for to be ‘the national interest’ by Andrej Babis, Czech Vice-PM (Ceskenoviny.cz, 2017). Despite the fact that Czechs are among world heaviest drinkers and 27 000 Czechs annually die from cancer, it can be observed that government health campaigns have been rather scarce so far (Bezrakoviny.cz, 2018, n.p.).

Other Sectors

Ministries representing other big industry sectors in the Czech Republic such as Energy, Technology and Industries, and Banking and Finance, in other words, Ministry of Industry and Trade and Ministry of Finance, have been considerably less active in informing and educating the public than Ministries of Transport and Health. In 2016, Ministry of Industry and Trade launched the Ochránce Spotřebitele Facebook Page (2017), one of its first complex public awareness activities led by the Czech Trade Inspection Authority (CTIA). Its purpose has been to help citizens properly understand the market environment and educate them in consumer protection issues. Ministry of Finance has mainly co-led or participated in communication activities around Tax and Pension Reforms around 2010 and Public Finance Reforms throughout 1990s and 2000s. One big initiative that had been intently complemented by strategic communication was EET, the Electronic Records of Sales which we highlight above.

One further pattern we can observe by looking at Czech government communication from a thematic perspective is a relative density of human rights topics. Equality and human rights have a specific position in the Czech legislative system. There is a Minister of the

Czech Republic's Government for Human Rights, Equal Opportunities and Legislation position that does not have its own ministry, but it falls under the Office of the Government. From an anti-human-trafficking campaign in 2007, through preventing sexual abuse of children in 2011 and highlighting children rights in 2015, to promoting equal gender opportunities 2017, human rights constitute an important topic that the Government has focused on.

Topics that have formed the major government campaign in the Czech Republic, since the late 2000s until present, are neither surprising or too exceptional to what we know from the practice abroad. Public health, energy savings, human rights, and safe driving are common themes in most of the major democratic countries. Governments operate the communication process differently though, and thus we shall further explore the role of communication in the government structure, and types people or departments responsible for communication activities. All three points are vital for complex understanding of how Czech government communicates.

4.4. Government Communication: Structure, Strategy, Tools

We have stated that to understand government communication in its depth, we need to research the role of communication in the government structure, the emphasis which Government puts on communication and campaigns, and structural formation and efficiency of people or departments responsible for communication activities (see Sanders and Canel, 2013). In this chapter, we focus on these important points in Czech context and we shall look at how Czech government communicators view themselves and their teams, how they reflect their daily and long-term work, and what problematic or interesting issues they highlight while assessing government communication presence and future.

4.4.1. Structure and Organization

Pursuant to the Article 22 of the Act on Establishing Ministries and other Central Bodies of the State Administration of the Czech Republic, the 2/1969 Sb., as amended, and the principles stated in the Free Access to Information Act, the 106/1999 Sb., as amended, Czech Central Government organizations are legally obliged to communicate with public. Primarily, this process encompasses its passive segment, i.e. answering citizen and

stakeholder requests, and active segment, i.e. communication with journalists, preparation of long-time communication strategies, and maintenance of web pages including mandatory elements.

Institution	Department name	Organization	Number of people
Office of the Government of the Czech Republic	Communication	Press, Online, Public Communication	14
Ministry of Agriculture	<i>Office of the Minister directly supervising</i>	Press, Public Communication	X
Ministry of Culture	Press	<i>Not-divided</i>	X
Ministry of Defense	Communication	Press, PR	25
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport	External Relations and Communication	<i>Not-divided</i>	7+1
Ministry of Finance	External Relations and Communication	Press, Online, Public Communication	10
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Press	Media Relations, Online and Public Communication	10
Ministry of Health	Communication	Press, Public Communication	10
Ministry of Industry and Trade	Communication and Marketing	Marketing, Press	X
Ministry of Interior	Press and PR	Editorial Office, Strategy, Magazines	19
Ministry of Justice	Press	<i>Not-divided</i>	5
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	Communication	Press, PR	8
Ministry of Regional Development	Communication	Press, Online	9
Ministry of the Environment	Press and PR	Press, Online, PR and Marketing	7
Ministry of Transport	Communication	Press, Public Communication	11

Figure 19: Organization of government communication in the Czech Republic, source: own research in October 2017; X = not provided the information

In most cases, the communication departments structurally subordinate to an Office of the Minister and are thus strategically positioned in the organization structure of

a ministry. When looking at the names and organizational structure of the communication departments, we may mark several interesting points. First, there is no general agreement or practice how to name the communication departments. In most of the cases, they are called ‘Communication’ departments and they structurally consist of ‘Press’, ‘Online’, and ‘Public Communication’ sub-divisions. An almost equally frequent practice is to name the departments as ‘Press’, and in some cases even ‘External Relations and Communication’, ‘Press and PR’, and ‘Communication and Marketing’². Most of the departments have vacancies and are not full compared to the number of people that ought to work there according to official job places.

Second, the internal competences and tasks differ between ministries. In some cases, these departments communicate with journalists, maintain the website and social media, and respond to public queries. In some but not many cases, strategic and marketing part is highlighted too. We do not implicitly suggest that marketing and strategy are not present within all the ministries, but their position in the organization structure may arguably stress their importance for a ministry. For instance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed that marketing is operated by the public diplomacy division, organisationally different to the communication department. The spokesperson of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports is not organizationally falling under the communication department.

We may verify this by looking at the research testimonials:

A1: ‘Our department comprises 10 people divided into three segments. One of them communicates with journalists, prepares projects and campaigns, then there is a small part which prepares web pages and social network sites. Third section focuses on legally binding public communication, according to the 106/1999 Sb., Free Access to Information Act. In theory, we should know about everything that goes public, though sometimes it is not perfect. The minister, the deputy ministers, and our team can communicate on behalf of the Ministry.’

² In Czech: odbor tiskový, odbor komunikace a marketingu, odbor tisku a PR, odbor vnějších vztahů

A2: ‘Communication department comprises 13 people divided into three segments, i.e. press section, marketing and PR section, and public communication section. The press section is more tactical, the marketing and PR section is more strategic. The public communication section deals with all public requests.’

A3: ‘I have 12 people in my team. We launched new social media profiles in January, led by one team member. It is not a bad thing, though I believe that one person is enough to work with social media. We are not formally working as spokespersons, but as consultants, due to some imperfections in law.’

A4: ‘My department deals with public requests. We acknowledge that the public is both a citizen and the business sphere for us.’

Organizing communication within central government organizations means dealing with legal requirements – mainly public procurement rules and length which are one of the biggest observable process obstacles that prevent better response from commercial sphere, and a limited number and skill-set of the staff (described more in depth in latter sections). In the stakeholder perspective, communication departments within Czech ministries prevalingly focus on journalists. Maintaining the website and social network channels, mostly it is about a communication flow towards masses, not targeting niche groups. Communication towards businesses and specific stakeholders takes place within public consultations and legislative preparation, even though one institution explicitly highlighted business as one stakeholder group within general targeting of communication (A4).

A1: ‘I am afraid that we as communication department not usually directly communicate with businesses. If so, then we communicate with associations more often. But it is more about prevention, because we usually expect that they would have some issues with it anyway.’

A2: ‘Regarding other groups, these are the so-called qualified citizens which means business or specific interests.’

A3: ‘We organize workshops where there are discussions with business or associations. This conversation sometimes goes down to a level of a Head of Department. Equally with public consultations.’

A4: ‘When there is any change in legislation, our expert departments invite business for the seminars themselves. We organize it with the Chamber of Commerce too. It is quite successful. Our helpdesk focuses on both wider citizens and businesses. Communication department participates on this, yet we are in touch with media more often.’

A5: ‘We communicate together in the preparation period when business reaches us with their optimal proposals, but also in the implementation period, when they flag the issues or ask on specific implications of a legislation. We then organize seminars and offer methodological help.’

While asking the interviewees specifically on the communication towards the business sphere, we found that communication departments usually play a less important role in the process. Active communication towards the business takes place in the form of consultations between expert departments of a government agency and an appropriate counterpart in business sphere. Communication departments help with organizing the events such as workshops or conferences. Our first remarks then state that government-business communication is at organizational level, prevailingly, the matter and responsibility of individual expert departments within ministries, and communication departments do not play a major role in the process. They merely help facilitate the events and they answer requests under the Free Access to Information Act, the 106/1999 Sb.

Nevertheless, further conversations with the research participants uncover that there is a potential space for the task and operational extension of communication departments into more strategic help with stakeholders who would exceed the competences and skill-sets of the expert bodies. Communication expertise would become a helpful asset.

A5: ‘In my position I would really appreciate if somebody would organize communication in this matter... [strategic communication with business]. Typical situations where we have a gap is when adopting a new legislation and we need to

inform all various stakeholders it is here and how to operate in accordance with the legislation. Historically, there has not been such a common practice among governments.’

4.4.2. Communication Plan and Mix

Strategic communication planning is undeniably a core identifier and sign of professional government communication process in the 2010s which has been highlighted by Sanders and Canel (2013), the Leader’s Report (WPP, 2017), and most of the government communication scholars (e.g. Holtzhausen and Zerfass, 2014; van Ruler, 2018, p. 370). Therefore, we asked the research participants whether they have a communication plan and what communication mix they usually use.

A1: ‘We use standard tools as press releases, media interviews, media or analyst breakfasts, the last of them is maybe touching business the most.’

A2: ‘We run many activities, from press materials preparation, through social media, YouTube videos, but also an effort to make the communication more strategic. We try to make an ideal communication mix.’

A3: ‘We do not use paid advertising. We would like to consider a TV spot, but this is just early thinking. We try to mix press releases, agency documents, and Facebook or Twitter. We are not yet able to prepare a campaign which would be like: in June, the Act is going to be applied, so we prepare materials in March and send them in May. But we want to go in this direction.’

A4: ‘We have a communication plan. Our department and, equally, the expert departments which know what is next in legislative process.’

These testimonies match what the author of this text experienced in two years of working with Czech central and local government communicators and what he discovered in his Master thesis in 2014. Traditional media logic of working with journalists on press reports has still been a major communication tactic of Czech government communicators. Depending on expertise and on regional and thematic delimitation, government agencies have slowly begun engaging other stakeholders, i.e. academic sphere, analysts, and

business leaders. Social media usage has now become relatively mature, using mostly Facebook and Twitter at daily basis.

Generally, government communicators do not have an extra budget to develop other kinds of activities that demand either higher strategic capability or paid forms of marketing communication. From the perspective of communication planning and mix, Czech government communication remains more tactical and short-term than strategic and long-term (see Soukenik, 2014). Larger campaigns around one specific topic require hiring an external communication provider such an advertising or PR agency and, generally, a formal and complicated procurement process that implicitly discourages many companies from bidding. Educational and social behaviour campaigns that have been a part of state-run propaganda under authoritarian regimes in the 20th century, and later appeared in several cases of ‘Nemyslíš? Zaplatíš!’ or ‘Bez rakoviny’ in the free Czech Republic since 1990s are usually either directly politically led and motivated such as ‘EET’ or resulting from enlightened individuals’ work exceeding formal bureaucratic requirements.

Czech government communication was characterised as being ‘reactive, inconsistent, and volatile’ by Soukenik (2014, p. 49). We thus asked the government interviewees on their perception of the two-way process nature, and on their active communication cases.

A1: ‘We try to be active. We used to be rather more passive 5 years ago when I joined the team here, we countered the attacks from journalists and the public sphere. Now we try to think about future and plan activities including specific stakeholder groups. One of our sub-bodies is quite hostile to media. They stiffen after journalists cover them negatively and we then need to engage in the process.’

A2: ‘When you want your information to appear somewhere today, you need to buy the ad space. But when you pay for this, political heads of the ministries want to have a welcome word from the Minister and the information becomes political. It is a virtuous circle.’

A3: ‘Default setting of our institution is that we consult. It is partly buck-passing, because after a workshop or a conversation, we may say that we have already covered this topic and we move onwards.’

A5: ‘When we prepare new legislation, we send the proposals to our mailing list including associations and trade unions. By default, we ask the relevant bodies. They also approach us with their ideas. We also try to watch if an information got to the relevant bodies in various sectors.’

Despite the patterns of increasing proactivity in setting agenda and engaging stakeholders, inconsistency and volatility characteristics can still be observed when talking to various people representing the ministries and sub-ordinated agencies. Figure 15 above uncovers the key problem which is an overrated importance of press communication both in organizational structures and activities compared to other important parts of the communication mix such as community events, design and visual communication, and, importantly, paid advertising such as PPC (pay per click), UX (user experience), e-mail marketing, and in-depth social network analysis which are crucial in contemporary online communication to be visible among target groups (see Bishop, 2016).

4.4.3. Issues, Changes, and Developments

Going more in-depth and asking the government interviewees whether they perceived any changes and developments in the government communication discipline since they started working in the field, most of them unsurprisingly agreed on the major role of the web and social network sites. They all claim that managing Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube is a common practice and that they all must have reacted to the overall trend in social communication transition to online networks. However, some of the interviewees note different issues which are, for instance, lack of customer-oriented thinking, negative and bulvarised media coverage, ongoing politicisation, and the consequences of the Civil Service Act, valid since 2015.

A1: ‘Electronization of state is important. But it is not as much about communication as about opening data. Some institutions lack pro-customer thinking too.’

A2: 'It all comes down to media coverage of government topics. Politics is exaggeratedly explosive and positive coverage is a marginal thing. The rule is: positive article does not sell itself. Government ought not to present merely the Minister or Prime Minister, yet rather communicate about wider implications of new laws on daily life.'

A5: 'What could really help us would be a regular government-business communication based on what has been successfully accomplished and what is next. Communication specialists would help with information transmission. Communication strategy would help in how to get the message to different areas than merely news media. Maybe we need the transformation of current press departments into communication departments to be able to grasp communication more in complex.'

Open data as already noted in the above sections is relatively a new phenomenon for government sector, yet it is one of the key pillars of transparency and accessibility. The examples of utilising open data can be hackathons organized by both government and business sectors together such as the cooperation of Czech Telecommunications Office and AT&T in 2016 that focused on topics including smart cities and education (CTU.cz, 2016). A5 supported our preliminary thoughts stating that Czech government communicators had better to move from a press-only perspective to a wider communication strategy planning.

We still fight the overarching politicisation of communication and aftermaths of Civil Service Act adoption as further testimonies suggest.

A1: 'We have the Civil Service only because of the 106/1999 Sb., otherwise there would be nobody under the Civil Service. We are quite interested what happens with a new minister. If he wanted to sack us, what would happen.'

In the past, we used to have this schizophrenic situation that we shared our daily work with the political party of the ministerial predecessor. We then moved more to the institutional communication practice which is excellent. We help the Deputy Ministers and set important agenda. We learned that political agenda was not our stuff.'

A2: ‘Nothing has changed with adoption of the Civil Service Act. Communication department is not under this law. The Act is in its core beneficial, but it has still some flaws. This year, communication departments are inconsistent in their affiliation under the Civil Service and it is different at each agency.

A3: ‘The Civil Service Act has brought deterioration and uncertainty, especially in the government recruitment.’

A4: ‘We have both types of employees here. I do not know why. Nobody knew when we asked this in the past.’

There are numerous intriguing stories around the Civil Service Act in the Czech Republic which was adopted much later than in Hungary, i.e. 1992, Poland, i.e. 1996, and Slovakia, i.e. 2009. Back in 2015, several news media articles discussed the topic of whether government communication officers were going under Civil Service or not, arguing that press officers would not be part of the Service, but communication department directors would be (e.g. Brožová, 2015). Obviously, the situation has not clarified until 2017. There is still a duality of understanding the role and purpose of communication officers. We arguably need to address this issue while discussing the future of government communication in latter sections.

In 2014, Soukenik (2014, p. 51) discussed the role of the Office of the Government in the government communication organization and he asked, ‘whether the Prime Minister and affiliated units such as the Office of the Government and Government Councils ought to stand above the rest of policy fields and coordinate government communication flows, or to play mere supportive role for the Prime Minister.’ Therefore, research interviewees were asked the same thing in 2017.

A2: ‘The Office of the Government is not a central authority, but sometimes it takes over this role. It coordinates several issues with the ministries such as the V4 countries presidency on which Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Trade and Industry cooperate as well. It is about coordination, but according to topical accountability.’

A3: 'If it is about government programme statement, the Office of the Government communicates the milestones. But I cannot imagine that government agencies would come to the Office with media plan and would coordinate together. Specific agenda such as digital agenda could be coordinated by the Office, but if a person who stands a bit outside the firm structure or is not too close to the Prime Minister, he would no real power to manage it.'

Finally, government interviewees mentioned two more issues that prevent further advancement of government communication in the Czech Republic. First, media ownership and oligopoly tendencies are not described as a positive factor (A2) and the length of administrative procedures that are in contrast with demands for immediateness and conciseness in contemporary communication.

4.5. Government Communication and Private Sector

Government and public administration structures in the Czech Republic are the object of interest of many various stakeholder types. All kinds of companies and entrepreneurs communicate with government at least once per year during the first quarter about taxes, and health and social insurance. Bigger corporations are legally bound to provide tax results even more often, ranging from monthly to quarterly periodicity of contact. Tax returns, vehicle registrations, municipal fees, and waste fees are the starting point of exploring the world of communication to government structures. However, this all is usually obligatory and although it is vital to realize that we all communicate with government in our daily lives, it is not what researchers and practitioners commonly understand by the Public Affairs activities.

In contrast, public affairs activities are characterised by their non-obligatory nature and they are driven by somebody's interest. As presented in the theoretical sections, there can be numerous types of interests that stakeholders such as corporations, NGOs, labour groups, or wide public perceive in relation to the state administration and politics. Paying taxes, employing citizens, pushing GDP, and benefitting the society in a wide spectre of cases, most corporations need to know what is going on in politics and in government. The information role of public affairs is naturally to complement media coverage of

current affairs and in a wider sense, key C-level executives of corporations usually closely watch their topics of interest and receive them from more than one communication input.

Public Affairs industry in the Czech Republic is in a specific and widely-acknowledged sense composed of three pivotal actors in public sphere. First, big corporations usually have designated people who focus on relations with government and public sector. They are regularly positioned high in the company structures, reporting to CEOs or they are even members of company boards. Their position titles range between an External Communication Director, through a Public-Sector Director, a Public Affairs Director, a VP for External Communication, to a Head of Communication. Government issues are also being addressed in Procurement, Legal, and Strategy departments, and among the management level of Ministers, Deputy Ministers, and their teams.

Second, there is a whole industry market of agencies that have public affairs in their names or description of practice. As Kollmannová and Matusšková (2014, p. 56) outline, an Association of Public Affairs Agencies has been established in the Czech Republic, composed of six entities, CEC Government Relations, Eurooffice Praha-Brusel, Fleishman Hillard, Grayling, Merit Government Relations, and PAN Solutions (APAA, 2017). These companies either fully focus on public affairs practice, i.e. CEC Government Relations, Eurooffice, Merit Government Relations, and PAN Solutions, or they have their inner teams within a wider communication focused company structures, i.e. Fleishman Hillard and Grayling. Beside the APAA, there is a wider market of communication or public relations agencies which offer government relations as a complementary practice such as Cook Communications, Crest Communication, Ewing Public Relations, Hill+Knowlton, Native PR, Ogilvy PR, PLEON Impact, Stance Communication, all members of APRA, the Association of Public Relations Agencies (APRA, 2017).

Third, there are several key trade and commerce associations in the Czech Republic, grouping its members in accordance with their industries. The two most important associations from this research piece's standpoint are the Czech Chamber of Commerce (2017) and the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic (2017). Industry wide initiatives, new legislature watch and proposals, and selected actions, e.g. European negotiations, are often being driven by the industry trade associations. The reason is that a

piece of legislature only rarely affects one company within an industry. More likely it impacts a whole industry field and joint action can be arguably more efficient than individual proposals. Besides the trade and commerce association, the key lobby groups are law firms and NGOs, yet their lobbying impact remains under-researched.

4.5.1. Cooperation and Perception

Mutual perception of the A and B groups of interviewees was one of the key research themes, directly addressing the RsQ4. We have already presented the perspective of the government in the preceding chapters and now we shall focus on the side of business.

First, we explored whether the business representatives thought strategically in their communication with governments. One of the key documents that form a basic starting point of long-term, coherent, and purposeful communication, is the communication plan. It comprises several types of analysis including the situation, competitors, and field requirements, strategy, message, tactical tools, budget, timeline, and measurement of ROI. If businesses include government stakeholders in their communication plan, we can claim that their government relations activities may be considered strategic (Sanders and Canel, 2013). Therefore, we specifically asked the interviewees whether they had a communication plan and whether they include governments in it.

B1: ‘It is necessary to separate this according to the communication with government aims and purposes. Public administration is the regulator of business, so an agency has the power to approve, consent, or manage your business to some extent. Such a contact with them is then linked to problem- or case-solving. Furthermore, the state represents public finances. It demands services for the tax-payer money. In this perspective, we are in permanent contact, in educational sense. Other forms of contact include lobbying, regional authority communication, and our mission-based fight for good.’

B2: ‘Yes. Government communication is the part of communication plan. Both corporate and product communication.’

Secondly, we asked the interviewees on the character of interactivity in government-business communication (see Warhurst, 2007).

B2: 'Communication with government is mostly active from us and individualized. It happens on a very personal level with specific people. In parallel, standard media-focused communication takes place. But we perceive this as a part of government communication as well. Most of the government stakeholders get media monitoring and see our articles in it.'

B3: 'Regulators are used to getting much information. They ask a lot. It cannot be one-sided. You must establish mutual, interactive communication based on trust.'

B5: 'I cannot say who is the common initiator of communication. The PR team mostly invokes the discussion. But I can imagine that the ministry would be active in topics such as a strategy for information society in the 21st century, inviting experts into consultations. If it is linked with a new legislation, industry consultations are the crucial part of the process. A different situation can take place if there is a new law in preparation phase and the originators have not included our industry in consultations.'

B7: 'It is half to half. We are members of several industry associations and we are the part of consultations through them. Our individual action is also half to half. We are asked to attend meetings and we communicate ourselves. First actor to target is a Ministry, then the Government, then the Parliament.'

B8: 'If it is about our core business, we have well-established mutual communication channels. In new areas we are the ones who normally educate the Government. We also prepare a reactive communication plan for certain situations, especially political ones.'

Overall it seems that government-business communication gradually moves from being mostly reactive from governments to businesses to a more interactive process. Expert consultations, either through industry associations or individually established have become a standard part of the policy process with increasing openness from governments

which has also been supported by opening data and allowing the public to watch the legislative process via the websites of the Office of the Government and the Parliament.

Thirdly, we asked the business if governments listen to them. Empathy is the crucial part of the communication process and democratic power balance. It generally seems that there is an established mutual relationship between most of the business representatives and governments. Among big companies it is usual that people know each other personally and thus the listening process is easier. Nevertheless, this fact may also indicate a possible closed and bounded ecosystem of personal relationships that might be difficult to break by newcomers to the system which is also mentioned by B3.

B3: 'They listen, but you must already have an established relationship with them. You need to be in the industry for some time and people need to trust you. You cannot just start running an agency and do it. It does not work like that. You need to profile yourself as an expert and that you are not the one who shall lecture them. You need to develop social skills to do it.'

B6: 'It is quite difficult. Communication works with higher levels such as the Ministry of Industry and Trade, but it is due to the fact I personally know people there who listen. If I explain that something is wrong, they may accept it.'

B7: 'A good example of government openness is the European Commission's Winter Package. The Ministry of Industry and Trade established a working group and invited business representatives. Openness is here and goes in the right direction.'

B8: 'When we identify a certain area and we get in touch, it works well. It is because we stand behind a lot of GDP percentages. And we get a good feedback from them. They want to learn. In Visegrad Group it is rather more common that ministries rely on associations than a specific company. It is easier here in the Czech Republic to target governments individually.'

B9: 'They listen, thanks to our size. And I know a lot of people, almost everywhere. I cannot really complain, we are successful by 90 percent. And we avoid

clash with public administration. My role is to find a solution that addresses a business problem, but also solves government problems. Business often says that governments only cause problems, but I try to understand what is behind government decision making. We communicate as a company rather than through associations.'

Fourthly, we explored the hierarchy and power character of government-business relationships. We can observe that most of the interviewed companies operate on all vertical levels of relationships. They all highlight the importance of communicating with specific actors at different levels. B4 and B5 mention the rigidity of the system and it is an interesting observation indeed, because the more we went to in-depth details of conversations, the more the people tended to mention issues, even though they initially said that the government is more open than before.

B1: 'Regarding our industry operations, our contact is with the C-level positions within governments, i.e. the Minister, the Deputy Minister or Heads of Departments. If it is about expert issues, also we deal with individual departments. Long-term issues are being solved with the top management of governments, short-term and less important ones with individual departments.'

B3: 'I have always been in touch with the C-level. Heads, deputies, executives. Not so much ministers though, they are quite far from specific issues.'

B4: 'It is different with specific lower-level agencies and ministries. Our team has worked together for a long time which is our advantage and we have good relationships to the level of individual officers. Therefore, we can detect a new legislation at early policy stages. It is a bigger problem with ministers and deputies. Czech state is still quite distant and keeps telling us not to disturb.'

B5: 'Public administration is a rigid system to certain extent. Directors talk to directors, officers talk to officers. When we need to talk to the Minister, our CEO comes to see him. But the communication takes place between regular officers and our teams rather more often than the C-level. This has nothing to do with lobbying though.'

B7: ‘Specialists and analysts are in contact with regular officers. I, personally, communicate with C-level people and together with our CEO also with deputies. You need to communicate at all levels, from the bottom up. I do not remember being denied when asked for a meeting. If you are a big company, I cannot see the reason why not to meet up.’

B8: ‘When we have a ministerial visit in the factory or have a joint meeting with the Prime Minister, the PA department deals with it. In other stakeholder actions it all depends on a topic. We also deal with CSR issues. With expert level consultations, we know about the communication, but do not actively jump into it. We have an agreement to have the Minister and the Prime Minister’s number in our mobile phones. However, many companies think that a meeting with the Minister will solve everything. We use all levels.’

Fifthly, we wanted to discover the changes, in other words, how the field has evolved since the preceding years to present. Here, it becomes rather more interesting and the interviewees have begun being more open. Several interviewees highlight the role of Twitter in government communication and general advancement in professionalisation with one exception of B9.

B4: ‘It is important to highlight how Twitter has changed the communication. There is a big question of how government officers should use Twitter. They either have not discovered the platform or they do not know how to use it.’

B5: ‘Twitter has a major power and important in government and public administration spheres. Unsuccessful lobby contact may appear on social media as a problem. We lobby transparently today through parliamentary committees. The dialogue must take place. They must do their job for which we pay them. We need to be a bit happy, it is not a charity work.’

B7: ‘There was no public affairs 11 years ago when I started working in the field. Our company was one of the first ones and other companies came to visit and inspire themselves. There has been a big advancement in how C-level managements value public affairs. It brings more results than before. It is no longer about

passive waiting, but more an active lobbying for your interests in the process. And when you cannot influence it, at least you know it comes and what the implications are.’

B8: ‘Even though it is unpopular to claim it, I perceive a positive tendency in government-business relations and communication. We are not there yet, but still. It has become more usual to gather business to government working groups.’

B9: ‘The quality of public administration has significantly decreased in the past seven years. It has been blocked by the Civil Service Act. The only institution that operates well is the Central Bank. Everyone is afraid of them and they talk to you. I cannot tell you a different one. 15 years ago, the state administration used to help you more.’

During socialist governments, bureaucracy has increased. A big percentage of problems is caused by its incompetence. Smarter people used to sit there. Paying people in the state sector is the real tragedy too. Each government officer is afraid of criminal accusations. A decision that might be interpreted as a positive and empathic tendency to business is perceived as a bribery. It is the fear of taking responsibility of self-decisions.’

Finally, we shall highlight one testimony that compares the practice in the Central Europe. Naturally, it cannot be generalised, but it is a too interesting insight to omit it.

B1: ‘I have such an international experience. In Austria, it is largely about a formal behaviour and hierarchy, a bit like during the Habsburg monarchy. All these details there can lead to not perceiving the real problem. In Slovakia, external influences come into the process. Someone knows someone, and they are focused on personal benefits. It is not illegal, but it is very often heavily adjusted to someone’s needs. In Germany, it works well, and we communicate to the point.’

There are natural differences between countries that experienced authoritarian regimes after the WW2, i.e. Czech Republic, Slovakia, and others, and those who did not, i.e. Germany (at least its Western part) and Austria. However, it seems that there can be

certain differences in the development of the formerly authoritarian-led countries 27 years since the fall of the Eastern-bloc. Our findings thus support the initial thoughts and comparative rankings such as the Global Competitiveness Index or Corruption Index (more in the Chapter 1.1).

4.5.2. Government Campaigns Perception

In this thesis, we intend to follow the existing research pieces however scarce they are. Kollmannová and Matušková (2013) started the debate and cooperated with the IPSOS research agency to detect attitudes towards government communication in society. We thus asked our niche research sample how they perceived government campaigns, the classic, citizen-targeted communication activities of Czech ministries and other state authorities. Both business and public affairs agency representatives were clearly critical and presented different reasons and ideas for advancement.

B5: ‘I recall some campaigns, separately of the Social Affairs, Industry and Trade, Finance ministries. But the campaign preceding the EU accession referendum was perhaps the last case of pan-government communication action. If EURO comes to the question, then it also could be a big government campaign.

Government should order detailed research survey what people want and need to hear. You can observe the so-called communication for communication in the state sector. If you see the banner claiming that this project was supported by the EU, it is a big trouble and bad ROI. They need to make these campaigns by the EU rules. Government press departments should have less employees and should work with external professionals. And they must get data, i.e. by omnibus, focus groups. Relatively small amounts of money well invested, also to future election results.’

B6: ‘The only recent campaign I can recall is the EET. But I got angry during every TV ad. They should create campaigns promoting democracy and the rule of law. But it is not an easy thing to say shortly.’

B7: 'I think whether I can really recall a specific campaign in our industry. Thematic communication is scarce. One such case is smart cities. Has anyone explained really what it is about?'

B8: 'There is a big gap. Many topics are the responsibility of the regulator and have an impact on private sector. There are only bright exceptions when government and business communicate coherently with the public. Nemyslíš-Zaplatíš made sense, but I'd have a problem to tell you five more of them. I also think that media interest in reporting what government is doing is really low.'

C1: 'They cannot communicate, and they do not perceive it as a problem. We have no Mr. Europe. A politician who would rebut the populist delusions of e.g. Mr. Okamura and the President. We sometimes tried to fulfil this role. There is an overarching belief that there are only non-elected officers in Brussels and we need to adopt everything. It is a strategic failure and the whole state is the victim. The world is more complicated than it used to be, and relationships are more complicated too. Explaining difficult issues is not in the centre of a political interest. Mr. Babiš is the sales person of chemicals and thus it is as it is. He has zero opinions on domestic and foreign policy and democratic power balance in the world. He wants to restrict the Parliament!'

C2: 'Generally I think that government campaigns are weak. Communication departments are not motivated to be professional. Some of them are politically aligned with the Minister, so they try harder. Communication of a government agency works worse than the communication of a specific person. Lately I got interested by the communication of food quality. It is perhaps too early to say that, but I think it was a great communication activity of this government. They have data and it is a very media-attractive topic. There is always a problem to sell something positive. People will not listen to it so much.'

C3: 'I recall that the Ministry of Agriculture ran a campaign supporting regional food. Ministry of Finance ran the EET campaign, this was a monumental campaign.'

The only specific campaigns from the recent period recalled by the interviewees were the EET and the food quality standards (see more in the Chapter 4.1 and 4.2). Participants generally agreed that thematic communication around their industry topics is rather weak. B5 and C1 mention the European Union, the good and the worse cases. Similar patterns appear in this topic as in the previous ones including the Civil Service Act incongruity, politicisation, and the Government's lack of skilled people able to run campaigns.

4.5.3. Public Affairs Field Perception

One of the key objectives of this research has been to map the perception of public affairs and lobbying from three key stakeholders, i.e. government officers, in-house business people, and public affairs agency representatives. Except some minor exceptions, all these stakeholder types understand the core characteristics of public affairs and lobbying, consider them as beneficial and necessary for vital public sphere relations, and they also generally agree on biggest issues of the field, namely negative media framing and public misunderstanding. However, they are not united in the issue of regulation and how we can move forward.

A1: 'It is a necessary activity. Stakeholders must speak out. But it also weakens the groups that do not lobby, and some groups are heard much more than others.'

A3: 'Public affairs is an organizational unit within a company who communicate with public and government sectors. Public affairs are narrower and can combine diverse activities. I perceive lobbying as an executive part of public affairs.'

A5: 'Personally I perceive public affairs as a sub-unit of lobbying. As a complex communication of the industry with public and government sectors. Lobbying supports a goal of a company. I perceive both terms positively.'

First, government stakeholders usually understand that public affairs and lobbying are certain communication activities between government and business sphere. The words 'necessary' and 'positive' appear in almost all the testimonies. Nevertheless, there is still a relative discrepancy in understanding the relationship between the terms 'public affairs'

and 'lobbying'. Some of the interviewees think that 'public affairs' is a wider term than 'lobbying', the others think vice versa.

B1: 'I consider lobbying as a targeted activity aiming for achieving a specific change, promoting opinions or enforcement. Public affairs is an umbrella field which focuses on relations between government, politics, and business, and it is a continual process. Lobbying is specifically bounded by a topic or objective.'

B2: 'I do not perceive the difference, because I have never thought about this. Both are legitimate and necessary activities.'

B3: 'I would say that public affairs are a wider term than lobbying. Lobbying deals specifically with legislative process. Public affairs aim to find synergies of business and government, and influence things. It also very much overlaps with PR, so it is necessary to coordinate things with PR.'

B4: 'Lobbying is a communicative-relationship discipline. It needs not to be an expert discipline, because others can deliver the expertise. Public affairs person should be able to grasp the issue and uphold it within public and government sphere thanks to his or her expertise in communication.'

B6: 'Public affairs is lobbying. It is not anything else than building contacts to lobby.'

B7: 'It is an analytical, promotional, and relationship field. Public affairs is about lobbying, but it is a wider term.'

B8: 'It is a synonym to a certain extent. We try not to use the word lobbying because of its connotations. Sophisticated lobbying is also sophisticated public affairs in its complexity.'

B9: 'Public affairs is about having relationships with government. If you bring valid arguments, you may succeed. If you come one-off, you just make the life of officers more difficult.'

Almost all business stakeholders highlight the word ‘relationship’. They generally perceive the difference between both terms, yet some of them equalize them. Especially, B4 and B9 have brought notable arguments that support our thinking. First, public affairs and lobbying need not to be only about legislation and law, in contrast to the mainstream perception. Communication and relationship building is arguably the crucial skill-set of a public affairs person. Moreover, it needs to be a long-term and consistent activity. It ought not to be about bothering and annoying government officers. It needs to be mutually beneficial.

C1: ‘Lobby is only informing those who are in power of making decisions that shape the public life. Those who govern are not scientists and experts. Democracy would not be sustainable without lobbying.’

C3: ‘Public affairs is actually quite an unfortunate term. People mix it with public relations and it is a meatless term. They call it government relations in the USA. I cannot understand why Europe uses public affairs. Lobbying is one tool of public affairs.’

C4: ‘I think that lobbying, public affairs, networking, and government relations are the same. We only use different terms in different situations, like in real life. I use public affairs, but few people understand this term in the Czech Republic. If I say government relations, they understand more, at least those proficient in English. If I say networking, it is quite general. Government relations is a most comprehensible term. Foreign people use it.’

C5: ‘Lobbying is a part of public affairs, one of its tools.’

Public affairs agency representatives bring more arguments to the debate. They usually perceive the field more widely and in connection to various stakeholders, being in line with Transparency International (see Vymětal et al, 2014). Interestingly, C4 uses the word ‘networking’ and both C3 and C4 direct the debate towards ‘government relations’. Arguably, public affairs agencies focus on relations with central governments and politicians rather more than on wider spectre of activities theoretically belonging under public

affairs. From this perspective, it makes sense, because they sell their proficiency which is usually the network and knowledge of the legislative process.

4.5.4. Public Affairs Agencies: Organization and Perception

Let us now look at public affairs agencies in the Czech APAA, on how these interesting government-business mediators are organized and perceived by other stakeholders. All 5 public affairs teams that we interviewed comprise up to 10 people, mostly around 5-7 core members. Their skill-set and education differ. Three teams highlight the government experience and its necessity, one agency promotes political, i.e. elected, experience, and one agency's team comprise mainly business and communication experienced people. First testimonies reflect on their relationships with the government.

C1: 'They always listen to us. I have brought people from Brussels who knew how other EU member states decided which was always keenly appreciated by our ministry officers who would not know about it from different sources.'

C3: 'Generally we have good experience. One level is the Executive, especially ministries. Then there is the political level, i.e. the Parliament. Our experience with both is prevalently positive. We and our discussion partners expect a certain level of discussion and communication which we can offer. It is often easier for the officer to talk with someone who has got experience from the government and speaks in a similar manner with them than talking to businessmen who do not know the context and narratives.'

C5: 'When a person comes there saying that he represents this company and give out the card, I believe that many people do not even think of it as lobbying. Some of them imagine lobbying being something completely different.'

C3 uncovers one of the aspects of communicating with government, i.e. simplification and explanation. Building on the argument that politicians and even ministry officers are not necessarily experts in all the field they encounter, it seems vital to have a chance to compare information inputs from various sources. It also seems, stemming from C5, that one of the core public affairs activities, i.e. expert advisory, is a natural thing and it is

present in the government-business communication process, yet it is not always titled as lobbying. Therefore, what are the key moments of public affairs agency work?

C2: ‘The moments and activities vary. The most general form of communicating with public administration is a passive form, i.e. monitoring. We watch what government, politicians, and public administration are doing without direct interaction. Furthermore, there is an interaction based on state’s activity. If an authority is preparing a strategy that might move the politics and policy to a risky direction for our clients, we try to collect as much information about the authority’s thinking and plans as possible. We have a lot of partners in Brussels, so we know what is next in European legislature. Then we communicate with the government people who often invite us themselves for expert consultations. Then there is also the hot period when it is about a specific legislative proposal when we try to find as much support for our position as we can or propose certain topics to public and media agenda.’

In organizational sense, interviewed public affairs teams are usually in touch within the whole vertical hierarchy of government and public administration authorities. In the Parliament, they focus on Heads of Committees and people that are known for certain positions, but also on political party experts that could support more technical positions where required. Finally, most of the agencies agree that the field is growing and tends to professionalize.

C3: ‘I believe that it moves towards higher professionalism. We hear more and more from clients that they want to be represented by a professional agency to avoid scandals and to have equal partners in discussion. Generally, the demand for our services has grown in the past few years.’

4.5.5. Regulation of Lobbying

Lobbying is not regulated by law in the Czech Republic in 2017 which slows down any process of image enhancement and professional establishment of the discipline (Chari et al., 2010; Kollmannová & Matušková, 2014). There have been numerous attempts to regulate lobbying within Czech government, since 2005 when Lubomír Zaorálek MP

proposed the Ethical Code of Conduct in the Chamber of Deputies including the Paragraph V. which specifically mentioned lobbying and the necessity of a parliamentary register. Between 2005 and 2013 there have been several attempts and parliamentary proceedings dealing with the proposal of the Lobbying Act, none of which led to a successful adoption (Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic, 2010; Senate of the Czech Republic, 2010; Soukenik et al., 2016).

The latest official government proposal proposing several ways of regulating lobbying is a substantive bill proposal No. 21389/2017-OHR submitted by Jan Chvojka, the Minister for Human Rights and Equality (Office of the Government, 2017). This proposal comprises 4 different ways of regulating lobbying. The first option is leaving the field to self-regulation. The second option include ethical codex maintenance by policy makers, open diaries, and legislative footprints. The third option adds a lobbyist register and decreases the financial limits of accepting gifts. The fourth option includes a wider scope of stakeholders who would need to adhere to strict rules (Office of the Government, 2017). Let us now explore how the interviewees perceive the lobbying regulation.

A1: 'I cannot imagine lobbying regulation in its wide sense. But a register could be a minimum what the state could do for it.'

A3: 'I can imagine adhering to certain rules, but I am not sure whether I can enforce them. This is the biggest problem. When I say that a lobbyist needs to be registered, I need to archive the meetings. It is so wide practice that I am not sure that an act can really solve this.'

A5: 'The only path forward is a good practice. If somebody makes unfair deals, he would be able to do it either way. Those who do good lobbying call themselves public affairs purposely. I know about some proposals of open diaries, but if some people meet up at a petrol station during the night, it will not be archived, right? It would just be rules for rules.'

Government stakeholders talked about regulation very cautiously. They generally did not know the latest proposal and generally questioned the purpose of lobbying regulation. A5 brought an argument that no regulation will solve the problems of deal making in grey

zones outside the government and other authorities. This goes in line with what most of the business stakeholders mentioned as well.

B2: 'Essentially, a basic regulation of a register and monthly review of meetings is not problematic for me. But it does not prevent the malpractices in the field.'

B3: 'I am not a proponent of a hard regulation. I would rather see a soft regulation with commonly adhered rules. I did not like the jungle in 1990s when lobbyists brought suitcases full of money. The practice is different today. It is about contacts, about the force of the companies, about their relationships with politicians. Numerous former MPs work in public affairs. They still have the special entry card to the Chamber of Deputies. If you were not an MP, you may only enter the public entrance, you are not allowed to enter the offices. I really do not like this practice.'

B4: 'The register would help a lot. And to have a calendar and archive of meetings. It does not need to be public, but there must be a controlling mechanism. We Czechs do not tend to trust authorities. Then you have the only alternative and it is called transparency. Any semi-path is a problem.'

B5: 'I do not think that regulation would have a positive influence on lobbying perception. It is not about perception so much as about if it works or not. If we have a functional legislature. We should trust our rule of law.'

B6: 'How do you want to regulate lobbying? OK, so I will register myself. But if I want to lobby sideways, then what? You will not discover it.'

B7: 'I can imagine a certain level of regulation, i.e. the register and compulsory registration. But there is the crucial question of who should be included in it, namely inhouse lobbyists. Lower-level officers? It requires a wider discussion of what is the real aim of the regulation.'

B8: 'I propose self-regulation which is usually more efficient. In past 10 years, the regulation tendencies went wrong in the Czech Republic.'

B9: 'It is a complete nonsense. It is about a culture. Regulation may work in a society which adheres to rules, but if we do not have an elementary political culture, it will not work.'

Business representatives mostly question the purpose of lobbying regulation. Most of them mention that a basic form of regulation in the form of a register could help. B3 uncovers a serious issue which states that former MPs still have access to the Parliament, even when they no longer work there. Arguably, this creates an unbalanced environment and new legislation ought to take it into consideration. B9 mentions a lack of political culture in the Czech Republic and that it is the major differentiator of why lobbying is not well-perceived here. Finally, the big question of who should be included in the legislation was opened by B7 and by most of the public affairs agency directors.

C1: 'We clashed in discussion how to define lobbying and who is the lobbyist [...]. How do you want to watch every phone call? Those people who come to the Parliament in person today are the most honest of all [...]. We have a register in APAA with names of corporations we work with. This could work as a voluntary thing.

But then it should be said that this company lobbied, and it is not in the register. There must be a benefit too such as receiving government proposals in early stages. If we had the same principles here as in Brussels, it would be a problem. Agencies would lose clients. Companies are scared. The state can send tens of inspections to them.'

C2: 'The discussion has been divided into several streams. Associations and trade bodies say – we are not lobbyists, those and those are lobbyists. The current proposal aims only at those who represent third-parties and get paid for. It does not include in-house lobbyists, NGOs, and associations. It only regulates few companies.

It must encompass as wide number of subjects as possible including municipalities. Many MPs are members of municipal and regional boards as well. The

regulation goes to a wrong direction, without any control we will sign somewhere in. I would write there that I met five MPs and prove me that I was wrong.’

C3: ‘It only aims at public affairs agencies. This is absurd. Inhouse lobbyists and attorneys need to be included in there as well. It cannot aim at people but at job tasks. We have a problem of how to define lobbying. You can set a meeting in the Parliament, this is what we do. But how about informal parties, banquets? This is often more efficient. Lobbying register could work, but I want something in return, e.g. the entry card to the Parliament. Transparency efforts need to be pushed.’

C4: ‘Regulation is nonsense if it does not include everyone who lobbies. Attorneys, inhouse people, PR agencies will fight against it, but they naturally lobby. Finally, it will be a regulation of six members of APAA which is a nonsense. I propose self-regulation. We have cashless payments, auditors, physical address, we do not hide. These are the differentiators.’

C5: ‘Regulation should be as wide as possible. If you regulate APAA, you regulate those who do not constitute a problem. Grey zone will be omitted. We are amid the 1990s discussion of what is lobbying.’

Public Affairs agencies in our research, all being the members of APAA, agree on several fundamental things. Regulation of lobbying should be as wide-encompassing as possible. They think that there is no clear understanding of what lobbying is and who is the lobbyist among various stakeholder groups including governments. They are afraid that the regulation is aimed at those who need the regulation least of all. And, finally, they all keep up the question of how to divide the professional lobbying and the grey zone.

Generally, we could say that all stakeholders, i.e. government, business, and public affairs agencies do not exclude the possibility of a basic regulation in the form of a lobbying register. But they all want benefits on both sides. C4 mentions specific ways how to differentiate and be perceived as professional, i.e. cashless payments and regular audits. They all agree that we need to strengthen political culture, reward and publicize those who adhere to rules so that media and public image of lobbying would be re-balanced.

4.6. Government, Business, and News Media

We emphasised in the Methodology chapter that government-business relationship may encompass lobbying, corruption, consultations, public-private partnerships, and thematic alliances between governments and corporations. All these phenomena can be researched focusing on new media as a research entity. In our last chapter within Findings we shall study the frequency of using the word lobbying in selected news media as flagged by the research interviewees as an important topic of the whole debate.

We have shown within the text that the word ‘lobbying’ is generally linked with negative perception. Almost everyone except business leaders, public affairs professionals, and selected government representatives and politicians promote negative values of lobbying. Furthermore, NGOs are being labelled as frauds of tax payers’ money. Why it is so? Most of the public affairs and lobbying studies within the Czech Republic approaches this question normatively. Being an exception, an anti-corruption NGO, Transparency International, summarized public opinion polls noting that approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ Czechs believe that lobbying leads to corruption (Vymětal et al., 2014). Most of the studies do not thoroughly search reasons of the negative image, and they do not offer paths forward. We were thus interested in posing the question to our interviewees of how they perceive lobbying and its public perception and where they observe key issues.

B1: The problem of lobbying is its public perception and image than any demand for regulation. Journalists automatically scandalise the term, sometimes purposely.

B2: Bad perception of lobbying is caused by a complete misunderstanding at the side of media and public, and the field itself to some extent.

B5: Lobbying has been assessed negatively since tobacco companies established the frame of how we talk about lobbying today.

C1: It is our feudal heritage. People used to be uneducated and officers governed above them. The life used to be easier and it used to be generally easier to grasp certain topic. Communism enforced this thinking, you had to shut up and listen. No entity outside the hierarchy could lobby of course. So, this is deeply entangled

in our past. 1990s scandals during privatisation even enforced this. It resulted in thinking that when somebody has deeper contacts with the state, it is *a priori* bad. The notion that the state ought to listen to stakeholders has not been and is not present.

C3: It has still been a struggle, because the media misinterpret the reality, saying that lobbying is entangled with corruption and with Janousek, Rittig, and other names. This is not lobbying though. The word itself is extremely hard to rehabilitate, even though we try to.

C4: I do not like the word lobbying, because it is absurdly profaned. Media talk about us, Janousek, Rittig, and Obama in one sense.

You can observe that the testimonies uniquely match. They uncover several reasons of why lobbying is negatively perceived in the Czech Republic, and what role news media play in its societal framing. For instance, C1 refers to the Czech Republic's turbulent history in which the state itself or its part within bigger entities has always been directed by a small minority. The authoritarian power was either feudal, Nazi, or Communist until 1989 with two short exceptions between 1918 and 1939, and between 1945 and 1948. In addition, the late 1990s brought serious political scandals and the result is that we have struggled with the authoritarian aftermaths in our behaviour until present.

Almost all interviewees mention the role of news media in framing the public perception of lobbying. We thus explored the news media image of lobbying in more depth to answer one of our key RsQs which asks: 'how is the communication between government and business sectors framed by media and what impact do media have on its understanding by public?' Analysing the frequency and comparing the news media types in three consecutive years – 2015, 2016 and 2017 – we have found out that lobbying is used in various collocations, mostly with describing a political or criminal activity, instead of referring to good practice. The term is being used in all kinds of news media including print and electronic dailies, and news reporting television programmes.

2015	Lobb*	Lobb* NOT Janouš* NOT Rittig* NOT Dalík*	Lobb* and Janouš*	Lobb* and Rittig*	Lobb* and Dalík*
MF Dnes / zpravy.idnes.cz	552	417 / 76 %	88 / 16 %	49 / 9 %	3 / 0.5 %
Hospodarske noviny, ihned.cz, aktualne.cz	551	473 / 86 %	26 / 5 %	53 / 10 %	4 / 0.7 %
CT24, CT1, ct24.cz	513	378 / 74 %	56 / 11 %	86 / 17 %	3 / 0.6 %
TV Nova, tn.cz	148	58 / 39 %	56 / 38 %	37 / 25 %	1 / 0.7 %

Figure 20: Frequency of the word lobbying in news media outputs in 2015

2016	Lobb*	Lobb* NOT Janouš* NOT Rittig* NOT Dalík*	Lobb* and Janouš*	Lobb* and Rittig*	Lobb* and Dalík*
MF Dnes / zpravy.idnes.cz	642	490 / 76 %	67 / 10 %	49 / 8 %	48 / 7 %
Hospodarske noviny, ihned.cz, aktualne.cz	514	417 / 81 %	27 / 5 %	27 / 5 %	43 / 8 %
CT24, CT1, ct24.cz	596	370 / 62 %	84 / 14 %	91 / 15 %	58 / 10 %
TV Nova, tn.cz	262	88 / 34 %	80 / 31 %	30 / 12 %	70 / 28 %

Figure 21: Frequency of the word lobbying in news media outputs in 2016

2017	Lobb*	Lobb* NOT Janouš* NOT Rittig* NOT Dalík*	Lobb* and Janouš*	Lobb* and Rittig*	Lobb* and Dalík*
MF Dnes / zpravy.idnes.cz	360	279 / 78 %	31 / 9 %	28 / 8 %	29 / 8 %
Hospodarske noviny, ihned.cz, aktualne.cz	418	361 / 86 %	12 / 3 %	20 / 5 %	28 / 7 %
CT24, CT1, ct24.cz	418	275 / 66 %	47 / 11 %	77 / 18 %	29 / 7 %
TV Nova, tn.cz	114	31 / 27 %	25 / 22 %	33 / 29 %	31 / 27 %

Figure 22: Frequency of the word lobbying in news media outputs in 2017 (until August 31st)

Figures 20, 21, and 22 uncover certain patterns that we shall highlight. One perspective is a mere connection of the word lobbying with the names Janoušek, Rittig, and Dalík. First, television programmes and news reporting originating from Czech Television and TV Nova media houses connect the word lobbying with the surnames of convicted criminals significantly more than the print media house news reporting presented on the case of MAFRA (MF Dnes) and *Economia* (Hospodářské noviny). Second, if we accept that there are certain similarities between MF Dnes and TV Nova in its wide population targeting and tendencies for less serious news coverage, infotainment-like media, in our case TV Nova and MF Dnes (read Klvaňa, 2004, p. 49, for context), connect the word lobbying with allegedly or even court-convicted criminals rather more than serious news reporting. Third, TV Nova scandalises the word lobbying in headlines significantly more than other referenced news media.

If we look deeper into data, we can clearly observe the percental difference in covering other topics connected to lobbying compared to reporting about the three convicted criminals between TV Nova and the rest of the sample. MF Dnes and *Hospodarske noviny* have been relatively consistent since 2015. There is an observable approximately 10 percental points drop in the case of the Czech Television which tended to connect lobbying with Janoušek, Rittig, or Dalík comparatively more in 2016 and 2017 than in 2015. In the case of TV Nova, a mere 1/3 of the references mentioning lobbying has been given to other cases. By brief skimming in the Newton Media Search we can see that the remaining cases are usually connected to less important criminals or politicians. However, let us now outline two interesting examples with a closer look.

Two examples: Střepiny and Jana Mrencová

Our first case example comes from the Střepiny TV show from the 19th of February 2017. Even though it is not the case of plain news reporting and the TV show can be described more as an infotainment commentary TV show, it is an educative sketch indicating how certain news media frame lobbying in the Czech Republic.

Moderator: ‘Celebrities gave the words lobbying and lobbyist different meanings than in other developed democracies. Dědic, Dalík, Janoušek a Rittig. The biggest stars in the field.’

Jiri Pehe, a political scientist: ‘These are not lobbyists. There are political entrepreneurs saying it very politely. They parasite on economics and politics’

Moderator: ‘They are usually linked by the knowledge of finding parts to higher levels and trading their clients’ wishes.’

Milan Eibl, Transparency International: ‘You develop your network to have a certain service for the service. An external clientelism.’

Moderator: ‘Marek Dalík is the only convicted lobbyist in the Czech Republic, actually sitting in the prison. Educated political scientist and former closest advisor to the PM Topolánek was convicted of demanding 500 million CZK as a bribe. He should be imprisoned for 4 years and pay 4 million CZK’ (TV Nova, 2017).

This presented case is not scarce. Deeper reading of MF Dnes reports are not significantly different to this case. When we consider that these both news media are among the most-read or most-watched in the Czech Republic besides Blesk, the most read daily, media coverage of lobbying that frames the term purposely by linking it with convicted criminals directly influences public opinion and actively works towards negative connotations of this term in society.

Our second case highlights Jana Mrencová, a controversial person commonly framed as a lobbyist by news media. In 2016, MF Dnes daily released an article about Mrencová making millions of CZK out of special contracts with the South Moravian Regional Authority Office under a different name, Lucie Proutníková, through Michal Hašek, its former Regional Governor (Neovlivni.cz, 2016b). Further media inquiries discovered that Jana Mrencová has been in close touch with major ČSSD (Czech Social Democratic Party) politicians such as Miloš Zeman, Stanislav Gross, Jiří Paroubek or, most recently, KSČM (Communist Party), and she allegedly delivered unprofessional media-related consultancy through charity connections with politicians’ partners (Neovlivni.cz, 2016b). Moreover, Czech Radio Radiožurnál reporters uncovered that Jana Mrencová was criminally accused and legally convicted of frauding public resources (Golis, 2016).

Last available information from early 2018 while writing this thesis is that Jana Mrencová has been facing a criminal charge of fraud and she is in insolvency. Overall, it is a flagrant example of a controversial business person running business deals with controversial politicians called a ‘lobbyist’. This case supports our calling after regulation and further professionalisation of public affairs and lobbying industry supported by fighting after transparency and fair game from both governments and private companies.

Finally, this chapter has shown that news media can powerfully shape how citizens and various stakeholders perceive the reality. The Public Affairs industry has not yet solved all its issues yet. Importantly, there is a lack of activities from inside the industry that would contribute to its better societal perception. In the Czech Republic, almost only one such initiative has been the Code of Conduct adopted by the Association of Public Affairs Agencies. However, they constitute only a fragment of the whole industry. In order not to rest in the negative status quo, large corporations must actively promote transparency and societal purpose of lobbying to move it under neutral narratives, and actively work with journalist to distinguish political business deals and professional public affairs.

V. CONCLUSION

This dissertation has explored government communication and public affairs practice in the Czech Republic. Through outlining key government programmes and communication initiatives in modern Czech political history from 1993 to 2017, and with key research focusing on the period between 2015 and 2017, it explored how government communication was managed, structured, and performed in that time, how big enterprises communicated with and perceived the government, and what issues of government communication and public affairs could have been detected in the Czech Republic.

The Conclusion chapter summarizes the Findings and, additionally, poses further questions and proposes several further ideas. Twenty-eight years after the Velvet Revolution and 25 years after the establishment of the sovereign Czech Republic, the author perceives the necessity of reflecting the advancement and future of government communication in the context of two important stakeholders: private sector and news media.

5.1. Answering Research Questions

RsQ1: What communication topics did government agencies in the Czech Republic mainly focus on between 1993 and 2017, and what gaps can we observe?

F: We identified two periods of government communication advancement. First, the period of what we call “Hope & Disillusionment” between 1993 and 2000 which was characterised by economic and social transformation, setting up media and advertising market, Voucher Privatization, and political scandals in late 1990s. In this period, we cannot yet talk about a strategic government communication process in accordance with contemporary research and practice. Communicating was prevalingly about press releases or reactive media answers, there was no strategic communication planning and marketing thinking that could be observed later in 2000s and 2010s. The following period taking place from 2000 onwards was named “Evolution of Strategic Planning”, taking place from 2000 until present. It was started by the pre-EU referendum campaign and some political campaigns on reforms and international cooperation (i.e. Proti Raketám), topics addressing new policies or behaviour change issues such as driving safety or healthy lifestyle followed.

From 2008 onwards, a new government communication era can be distinguished. Seminal campaigns took place and wider communication channels were adopted. In 2013-2017, less campaigns or initiatives were conducted, except for the EET and quality of the food. However, we could have observed more professionalised communication activities taking place on daily basis that included web publishing, social media, mobile apps with which governments came closer to private sector practices.

Since 2000s, the most common government campaign topic areas were Agriculture, Health, Transport, and Social Affairs including Human and Children Safety and Equality. Health and Transport have been the most important communication areas both in all the key periods since 2000s as safety and health constitute the primary concerns of people when they no longer starve and have a place to live (see Maslow, 1943). We cannot omit the International topics, i.e. the EU and nation branding.

Especially, branding the Czech Republic as a tourist and investment destination became professionalised in messaging, strategic concept, tools, and visuals in 2010s after the introduction of Czech Republic: Land of Stories long-term positioning campaign, and boosting CzechInvest and Czech Trade in promoting the Czech Republic as a place to invest in and helping Czech businesses to succeed abroad. There are several topics that have been miscommunicated and such a state of things has remained until present, namely the big reforms (e.g. Social, Health, Pensions), Digital Government and the EU topics that were communicated in 2000s, but the focus has almost disappeared in 2010s.

RsQ2: How is the communication between government and business sectors framed by news media and what role do news media represent in the government-business communication process in special regards to lobbying?

F: There are flagrant differences of how specific news media approach the word lobbying. We asked the research participants and conducted a frequency analysis of lobbying in four big news media channels within print, TV, and online media. Television programmes and news reporting originating from Czech Television and TV Nova media houses connect the word lobbying with the surnames of convicted criminals significantly more than the print media house news reporting presented on the case of MAFRA (MF Dnes) and Economia (Hospodářské noviny). Infotainment-like media, in our case TV Nova and MF

Dnes, connect the word lobbying with convicted criminals rather more than serious news reporting. TV Nova scandalises the word lobbying significantly more than other referenced news media. Read more in the Chapter 4.6.4.

RsQ3: What structure, organization, and tools of government communication can we observe in the Czech Republic?

F: Government communication is not coherently managed and organized in the Czech Republic. There is a significant organizational difference among the ministries in what is and should be included in a Communication department, i.e. Press, Marketing/PR, Online, Publishing, Events, and the 106/1999 Sb. operations. There is a lack of unified or cross-sectoral communication strategies, even though the C-level people know their colleagues within other government organizational units. However, the communication process remains sectoral and corresponds to resortism.

Furthermore, there is a big difference in the size of communication departments within ministries, ranging from 5 (Justice) to 25 (Defence) employees. At some ministries like the Ministry of Industry and Trade, we can perceive a frequent fluctuation at C-level communication positions that does not contribute towards professional and continual stakeholder engagement.

Assessing communication tools, today practice is still focused on a communication flow towards masses, instead of targeting niche groups as a priority. There is a perceived potential space for the task and operational extension of communication departments into a more strategic support in communication with various stakeholders, which was claimed by some C-level government representatives in our research sample.

Communication plan usually exists, but there is an overrated importance of press communication both in organizational structures and activities compared to other important parts of the communication mix such as community events, design and visual communication, and, importantly, paid advertising such as PPC (pay per click), UX (user experience), e-mail marketing, and in-depth social network analysis. This has arguably something to do with government communicators' skill-sets, communication budgets (when a campaign is not paid from EU or other funds, it is a great issue to find money for

communication activities), and the consequences of the Civil Service Act that prevents experts enter the Civil Service. Last but not least, public procurement within the Government suffers from bad reputation and prevents many private sector stakeholders to take part in it.

RsQ4: How do C-level government representatives perceive cooperation and mutual relations with C-level business representatives (and vice versa) in 2017?

F: Government-business communication gradually moves from being mostly reactive from governments to businesses to a more interactive process. Expert consultations, either through industry associations or individually established have become a standard part of the policy process with increasing openness from governments which has also been supported by opening data and allowing the public to watch the legislative process via the websites of the Office of the Government and the Parliament.

Most of the interviewed business stakeholders operate on all vertical levels of relationships with governments ranging from officers to Ministers, with an emphasis on Deputy Ministers and Heads of Departments. The interviewees all highlighted the importance of communication with specific actors at different levels.

RsQ5: How is the public affairs field organized in the Czech Republic in 2017 and what are its main issues?

F: We can flag several problems. Business understands the core characteristics of public affairs and lobbying, considers them as beneficial and necessary for vital public sphere relations, and generally agrees on biggest issues of the field, namely negative media framing and public misunderstanding of the field. The field is not united in the issue of regulation of lobbying. Government stakeholders talk cautiously about the regulation proposals, generally not knowing the latest proposal from 2017 and questioning the purpose of lobbying regulation saying that no regulation will solve the problems of deal making in grey zones outside the government and other authorities.

Business stakeholders question the very purpose of lobbying regulation, they mention that a basic form of regulation in the form of a register could help, and jointly highlight

a serious issue of former MPs still having access to the Parliament, even when they no longer work there, which strongly favours one group and opens the revolving doors topic up. Another big question mutually seen as a problem is which stakeholder groups should be included in the legislative regulation of lobbying.

Finally, among big companies it is not scarce that people know each other personally and thus the listening process is easier. Nevertheless, this fact may also indicate a possible closed and bounded ecosystem of personal relationships that might be difficult to break by newcomers to the system.

RsQ6: How did the adoption of Civil Service Act in 2015 impacted the government-business relations in the Czech Republic?

F: If there were positive expectations in 2013 about the forthcoming legislature, two and a half years since the Act came into force, the 2017 research participants perceived its consequences neutrally or negatively. Most of the stakeholders claim that the Act prevented people from entering the Civil Service, and that it brought deterioration and uncertainty, in contrast to its purpose.

The most interesting fact we found out was that not all communication departments within ministries had been put under Civil Service with various consequences such as prevailing politicisation of the departments, and a close attachment to a Minister and his/her political party. Political and expert issues are still hard to divide, similarly to setting long-term sectoral communication strategies that would not be replaced by a forthcoming ministerial change.

Overall: ‘How has government communication evolved in the Czech Republic since its establishment, and how do key government and business representatives currently perceive the mutual relationship?’

F: We have discovered that private sector representatives think that thematic government communication around their industry topics is rather weak and does not support industries and their objectives. We have shown several specific cases of how news media approach lobbying and how the term has been covered by various news media houses differently.

Compared to our preliminary thinking, public affairs and lobbying are core tools of all the researched subjects within our private sector sample, who use a wide scale of tools, but flag several major issues linked to regulation and news media positions which has been in line with our preliminary suggestions. Government communication departments lack financial resources which prevent them from using a wide communication mix and still spend large part of their budgets on things such as branded gifts or stationery. Civil Service Act prevented skilled professionals enter the Civil Service. This is negatively perceived by the business sphere. In terms of ethics, doing business with government is viewed negatively by a considerable part of private sector which again prevents quality and expertise to win over corruption and nepotism.

5.2. *The Path Forward*

What should the Government and the private sector do to continually improve mutual relationships and cooperation? Should they focus on polls? Or rather be more active and set topics based on own responsible and answerable approach?

The Government of the Czech Republic together supported by the Parliament and the Public Administration ought to focus on the following points that could enhance the Czech ‘communication politics and policy’. It is necessary to closely review the thematic campaigns from the beginning of the 2000s until present and evaluate all of them, set both long-term and short-term pan-resort communication priorities (see the UK Government Communication Plan – GCS, 2017), gather data about topics citizen feel misunderstood, target niche stakeholders, focus on neglected areas such as corporate identity, user experience, and design thinking, and set two organizational units under the Office of the Government, i.e. Government Digital Service and Government Communication Service.

Organizational status and responsibility in government communication is one of the most overlooked but important areas which could be improved in the Czech Republic. Our research testimonies have shown that Digital Agenda and Communication are so organizationally incoherent and dispersed that responsibility for making decisions and the ability of the state to move things forward are linked and, arguably, equally low. Creation of the Ministry of Informatics is not the way how to address the issues. Organizational importance of Digital Agenda and Communication must stand above resorts, ideally being

directly managed by the Office of the Government which needs to have a bigger power to link individual ministry communications together and plan key government communication strategies centrally. If we do not accept this paradigm change, we shall stall behind the development in Europe, and we will keep the last places in digital government advancement (see e.g. DESI).

It is necessary to change the current practice of targeting masses and, in contrast, focus on niche targeting, measuring message delivery efficiency, and publishing open data on as many issues as possible. Social media have begun the change, but it is not about technology, it is about strategic thinking and stakeholder mapping as we aimed to show throughout this thesis. Message delivery ought to be conceptually built on models whose first versions are offered to a critical review and are presented in the Literature Review (Chapter 2), especially the Stakeholder Model of Government Communication, the Triadic Model, and the Decision Wheel Model. Communication at all policy stages enhances the legislative process and its stakeholder understanding. Moreover, all stakeholders in the models ought to watch trends actively and propose changes that need to be made from the beginning of the 1990s, namely united identity strategy, and a better user journey and experience as the umbrella principle in government.

Should core questions and issues in the society be addressed by the Government or by private sector's CSR departments? How should the cooperation between governments and businesses look like in common topics and aims? How should we legally establish rules for such a cooperation, including newcomers and outsiders' positions and inputs? Is ethics sufficiently present within thinking on government communication? These are some of the questions further research could take up.

Considering wider societal trends, one trend that is still at the Innovation Trigger point within the Gartner Hype Cycle (Gartner, 2017) is the Design Thinking Methodology and its application on executive and legislative processes. The key principle behind design thinking is using empathy and better understanding of the target groups wishes and needs to propose innovations and paradigm changes in the present status quo. IDEO (2017) proposes four stages of design thinking. i.e. gathering inspiration, generating ideas, making ideas tangible, and sharing the stories. Connecting the Design Thinking methodology

with the ability to analyse big datasets and make the most out of the open data from various stakeholder units is the real way forward and a potential game changer in Central and Eastern Europe.

Second, the business sphere ought not to detach from the government and current affairs. Most of the leaders we questioned plan and execute communication strategies targeting not only customers, but also their thematic field allies, regional and national authorities, non-governmental organizations, and other units within the society. Business needs to know what is happening in government, but it also needs to take responsibility and action in educating governments by introducing them to new trends in their industries and help governments in their effort to keep up trust with citizens and niche stakeholder groups. Corporate Social Responsibility projects ought to focus on the areas the government sees as important ones in regional and thematic sense, and actively propose topics to governments, if there is a gap. Equally important activities are nurturing communication channels between the government and business, wider participation in tenders to significantly decrease non-transparent public procurement and taking part in lobbying regulation and business transparency discussions. Doing business, especially at the top level of the biggest companies, involves social participation and joint responsibility in public affairs.

Last, but certainly not least, news media must continuously realize their societal position and their power to shape public opinion. We have shown that lobbying keeps being wrongly approached, usually referring to convicted criminals. However, it is certainly not just about lobbying. The biggest problem of the current news media market in the Czech Republic is the oligarchization and existing conflicts of interests that closely touch government and business spheres (see e.g. Němcová Tejkalová and Láb, 2016). We argue that news media power balance can only be restored by selling media houses back to foreign companies that shall possess significantly lower conflict of interests. Certainly, it is equally necessary to prevent any government and parliamentary leaders to hold shares in or by any means control news media including print, online, TV, radio, and other media types. Simplification can be a vital thing. However, maintaining social capital and taking democratic responsibility should be a general standard of public service media, tabloid TVs, and other broadcasters such as YouTubers. It will never be outdated to think about media effects and power.

In this thesis, we proposed a new approach of theoretical government communication process assessment, and, most importantly, practical integration of the Stakeholder Model of Government Communication (pages 61 to 63) into government communication and private sector strategies. If adopted, the Model could be tested after several years by conducting wider-scale quantitative research and further research implications could be concurrently proposed. Any subsequent research addressing issues outlined in this dissertation is strongly encouraged.

Summary

This dissertation has explored government communication and public affairs in the Czech Republic. By outlining key government programmes and communication initiatives in modern Czech political history from 1993 to 2017, and focusing on the period between 2015 and 2017, the text explored how government communication was managed, structured, and performed at this time, how big enterprises communicated with and perceived the government, and what issues of government communication and public affairs we could detect in the Czech Republic. Stakeholder understanding of government communication has been steadily improving. However, private sector representatives still think that thematic government communication around their industry topics is rather weak and that it does not support industries and their objectives. Government communication departments lack financial resources which prevent them using a wide communication mix and suffers from negative prejudices from a part of private sector. Governments try to increase engagement, but Civil Service Act prevents skilled professionals enter the Civil Service. This was negatively perceived by the business sphere. Generally, however, government-business communication gradually moves from being mostly reactive from governments to businesses to an interactive process. Expert consultations, either through industry associations or individually established have become a standard part of the policy process with increasing openness from governments which has also been supported by opening data and allowing the public to watch the legislative process via the websites of the Office of the Government and the Parliament. Furthermore, there are flagrant differences of how specific news media approach lobbying. Most importantly, we proposed a new approach of theoretical government communication in the form of the revised Stakeholder Model of Government Communication.

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List of appendices

Appendix 1: In-depth interview questionnaire design (Czech language)

Appendix 2: Selected transcripts of the interviews (Czech language)

Appendix 3: Pre-EU referendum campaign 2003 imagery