

Strategic Governance and the Czech Republic: Theoretical Considerations, Real-life Performance

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Motto:

"Setting the agenda of government, and getting programmes that may not have natural constituencies onto the agenda may be the most difficult, as well as the most important, aspect of the policy process when seen with some detachment. Crisis and the threat of crisis may facilitate that process, but governments (always operating with limited resources, including resources of time and attention) may not wish to invest heavily in the remote and the unseen. Saving money or lives for society in some remote future is of course beneficial, but it may not be perceived as being worth large amounts of political capital." (Peters 2003)

Introduction

The research project **Strategic governance** constitutes part of the project **Visions and strategies of the Czech Republic's development** of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague (Potůček et al. 2004). It brings in theoretical concepts of, as well as empirical evidence about, strategic steering mechanisms (or their absence) in the life of the country. It collaborates with other scientific teams in a joint effort to better understand the whole *problematique*, and more specific issues, in a comprehensive and better-to-apply way.

It is true that strategic governance has only developed in a satisfactory way in a few countries of the world. Central and Eastern European countries have also embarked on this path, but until now have only been able to make a few initial steps. (Potůček (ed.) 2004, 2006b)

The rationale of this chapter can be divided into two subsequent goals. First, we will present a theoretical framework for a better understanding of strategic governance related to changing societal conditioning and future challenges and opportunities of the region.² Second, we will summarise the first empirical findings of our research asserting the above theoretical concept of strategic governance in an empirical analysis of its progress in the Czech Republic after 1989.³

Let us begin with the initial proto-conceptualisation of the notion: "Strategic governance can be understood as a dynamic process of the creation and implementation of policy, politics, and administration, that is animated by the

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2 Refer to Potůček (2006a) as well.

3 The detailed empirical findings have been published in Czech in a monograph, Potůček et al. (2007).

endeavour of manifold social and economic groups with different interests, but also by the search for a sustainable development orientation and social contract(s), that could counterbalance these interests in a way that will be compatible with the long-term interests of the whole society – including its future generations.” (Potůček et al. 2004)

To develop the theory of governance further is both a challenge and an opportunity: “Governance theory has tremendous potential in opening up alternative ways of looking at political institutions, domestic-global linkages, trans-national co-operation, and different forms of public-private exchange.” (Pierre 2000: 241)

Pierre and Peters (2000:69, quoted in Veselý 2004:12) assure us that “...it is virtually impossible to make any clear generalisation about governance since ‘it must be always contextualised and nuanced to be useful in describing particular settings’”. Consequently, the concept of strategic governance we are about to develop should be tailored to the specific present and future conditions of the Czech Republic: as a country on the borderline between the world centre and periphery and as a new member of the European Union, with its historical roots (including the legacy of communism) and specific public administration traditions etc.

A brief overview of the available literature already reveals certain preconditions of a sound analysis that are shared by most theoreticians: namely that governance is the core notion and its strategic dimension should be its derivative (Ochrana 2005a, see par. 1.1 and 4); and that governance is a holistic (par. 1.2), and multi-dimensional (par. 1.3) concept.

1. The notion of governance

There is a clear demand for a new paradigm, which can respond to the profound changes of governing processes during the last decades... The general tendency of it is well characterised by Bovaird’s (2005) question: “... are we moving to a future in which government remains the key player in public governance or is it realistic to assume that we might move through ‘governance in the shadow of government’ (Jesop, 2004) to self-organising policy and service delivery systems – ‘governance without government’?” The uncertainty about the traditional theories of governance, associated with the emerging new approaches toward its conceptualisation, are well documented, apart from ‘public governance’, by many other adjectives associated with this core term: ‘new governance’ (Rhodes 1996, Rouban 1999, Salamon 2002), ‘socio-political governance’ (Kooiman 2003), ‘good governance’ (Governance 2000), or ‘progressive governance’.

Let us consider some of the definitions that are in line with these characteristics.

1.1 Definitions

Governance means “... collective capacity to influence the future for the better.” (Dror 2001: xi)

"Governance is a system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political and social affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society and private sector. It operates at every level of human enterprise." (Governance 2000, quoted in Strategic (2002:1))

"Social-political governance means using an analytical and normative perspective on any societal governance that is 'collective'. 'Collective', not in the sense that the care and development of these activities is looked upon as a public task (the 'state'); a responsibility of the private sector (the 'market'), or of the third sector ('civil society') in isolation, but as a shared set of responsibilities. (...) Interactions as a social phenomenon, and governing interactions as a specific type, are a rich source for analysing and synthesising insights into many facets of governance." (Kooiman 2003:5)

There is a broad overview of other definitions in Veselý (2004:11 – 12).

The undisputable changes in the forms and ways of pursuing governance as a societal process in contemporary societies may suggest that the core of this concept is associated with processuality, plurality of actors, and comprehensiveness.

1.2 Holism in governance

With the growing complexity and rising interdependence of societal actors, the bureaucratic forms of governance based on old-style public administration and hierarchies seem to be losing ground, being continuously replaced by more fuzzy forms of steering (or mismanagement). Nevertheless, the failure to effectively embrace complexity may end up in increasingly chaotic and paradoxical situations. (Encyclopaedia 1994 – 5) The core problem for governments is that they have inherited, from past centuries, models of organisation that are structured around functions and services rather than being focused on solving problems. The key answer to these problems is a more 'holistic' government, which is organised more along outcomes and less around structures and institutions. (Perri 6 1997: 9, 37, 49)

Salamon (2002:19) attempts to translate this demand into a more instrumental language better suited to the practice of holistic governance. He introduced the term: *'tools of public action'*, i.e. identifiable methods through which collective action is structured to address a public problem.

The main paradox of contemporary governance is that governments are expected to solve ever more challenging and complex tasks in an increasingly interdependent world with less and less direct power and control at their disposal. The only rational response to this tension is to develop such tools of public action that will be more effective with less direct control and involvement, such as: organising public discussions on important issues of public life; setting up priorities; mutual learning, encouragement and support; implementing general regulative frameworks and relying on interactive networks, and multi-level governance. The application of all these approaches is vitally dependent on sound coordination, based on the holistic conception of both reality ... and public action.

1.3 Multi-dimensional approach

The holistic approach is much easier declared than applied in research practice. There is a legitimate second step of its application – to define the components of the whole to be studied. Most scholars have ultimately stopped trying to define governance. Given its relational nature, the notion of governance is “...*unlikely ever to be defined in ways which are so general that they will have universal validity*”. (Bovaird 2005:220).

The multi-dimensional approach makes it possible to identify all relevant aspects of the complex phenomenon studied – and to decide later, which of them should be taken into consideration when approaching a specific cognitive problem. Zürn and Liebfried (2005:1) conceptualise the modern nation-state with four intersecting dimensions: the control of resources, the rule of law and sovereignty, its legitimacy *vis-à-vis* its citizens, and social welfare. Veselý (2004:16) suggests a similar way of operating with the four dimensions of governance: its level (local, national, supranational, and global), its modes (hierarchies, co-ordination/co-operation, and self-governance), its dynamics (structures/institutions vs. processes), and its normative content (‘good’ vs. analytical governance).

For the purpose of our research, the development of the multi-dimensional approach is a must. Without a good definition of relevant dimensions of governance, preferably exclusive and independent of one another, there will be no language enabling us to understand and agree upon the specific field of our study. Hence, we will not have an effective tool to decide what belongs and what doesn’t belong to the field of our research interest.

2. Dimensions of strategic governance

Governance cannot be reduced to the national (state) level any more. Thus the researcher should take into account both the supranational (in Central and Eastern Europe especially the European Union) and the sub-national levels (par. 2.1). This cannot be reduced to the government and its activities. Thus, other regulators and actors should be taken into account, namely the market, the civic sector, and the media (par. 2.2). The contemporary, and even more so, the future governance should not put all their stakes on hierarchies; they should rely on horizontal links as well as on informal networks (par. 2.3). The above listed three core dimensions of governance in general are valid also for strategic governance and thus they should be taken seriously into its analytic consideration.

What follows is a conceptualisation of strategic governance as a specific segment of governance. The trial to specify a strategic dimension of governance out of a general notion of governance will always suffer from a measure of arbitrariness. I suggest that a distinction be made between its resources (that have also their parallel at the level of general governance) and (more specific) qualities, differentiating it from tactical and/or operational mode of governance.

There are four core resources of the strategic dimension of governance at the start of the 21st century: the global ethic (par. 2.4), the cognitive resources (including education) (par. 2.5), the institutional resources (including tools) (par. 2.6), and the social capital (par. 2.7). There are three core qualities of the strategic dimension of governance: the ability to anticipate potential futures (par. 2.8), the capacity 'to choose a society' (par. 2.9), and the 'emergent strategies' (par. 2.10).

Let us consider all of them while being aware of their mutual dependence.

2.1 Multi-level governance

The age of sovereign nation-states is over – at least in Europe (if there has been any at all). Governance is still to a large extent executed at the national level. Nevertheless, its increasing shares go either upward to the supra-national level (especially to the level of the European Union – e.g. the rule of law) or downward to the sub-national (especially regional) level. (Zürn – Leibfried 2005:25; Pierre – Pieters 2000) The need to cope with the increasing complexity of policy-making processes gives rise to the concept of multi-level governance (MLG). (Bovaird 2005:219); Veselý (2004:16) adds up the global level of governance that is still *in statu nascendi* (Dror 2001).

The trends of this development are not clear: it is not possible to identify a standard development for the (nation) state; one is moving toward a situation of structural uncertainty; the term 'post-national' defines a new constellation only in the negative sense, as something which has ceased to exist. (Zürn – Leibfried 2005:26) At most there is the broad concept of devolution of the nation-state as a whole, proceeding on to a mediated 'state without sovereignty', similar to the federal sub-units in the US (states) or Germany (*Länder*) in the 19th century. (Stolleis 2004:26)

The recent reform of public administration in the Czech Republic that shifted considerable responsibilities from the central to regional levels of public administration, and the EU's enlargement that shifted certain parts of sovereignty of the new Member States to Brussels, are other examples of this tendency.

2.2 Regulators 3+1: market, state, civic sector, and media

The influence of the market, state, and civic sector on public life, and the impact of their mutual interactions – sometimes synergic, sometimes contradictory, is carefully studied by many social scientists. Nowadays it is almost a *trivium* to assure that governments cannot fulfil their tasks alone, without engagement of the other two regulators in public life. The concept of governance based on such presupposition is sketched in Figure 1.

Figure 1
The concept of governance based on market-state-civic sector interface



Source: Strategic Round-Table (2002)

Peters (2003:22) pointed out the core of this approach in the following way: "... a basic concept of governing that involves building, within the public sector, a capacity for collective goal-setting and a capacity for steering the economy and society to reach these goals. Such a concept need not, and increasingly is not, based on hierarchical imposition of rule from the centre, but it does involve an ability to translate goals and ideas into action. Governance may be created in conjunction with individuals and organizations in the private sector, and indeed may rely heavily on those instrumentalities for their success."

Kooiman studies the state, market, and civil society as institutions which he feels are situated in the intermediate position in societal governance. Nevertheless

he has defined a special role for the state: "...the state, the market and civil society each represent specific societal needs and capacities. As long as the state is expected to intervene where the other institutions fail, it will remain playing the 'all-round' role in representing the society in governance". (Kooiman 2003:167) Veselý (2004:18) offers in the same context the concept of government with "structured interactions" with market and civic society. For similar entities, Benáček (2005) suggests the terms: markets, hierarchies and kinships. Analysing the role of the state and the market and civil society in post-communist countries, I prefer here, instead of the rather all-embracing term 'institutions', a more specific term 'regulators'. (Potůček 1999)

Peters (undated: 34) analyses the danger of capturing the state by either the institutional representatives of the market or the civic society: *"A standard critique of most patterns of linkage between State and society is that the State, or at least some organizations within the State, become ensnared by societal interests. That can indeed be a problem but need not be if the institutions for linkage are designed carefully."*

This concept of governance is based on the presupposition that the sharing of ideas and information needs to go not only from civil society toward government, but also the other way round. *"That is, individual citizens and organizations in society are not able to participate effectively if government is not transparent and does not make enough of its information and thoughts about future policy directions available to citizens."* (Citizens as Partners 2001, wording by Peters 2003: 35).

The relatively new, understudied yet increasingly relevant and influential actor and regulator of public affairs, is the media. (Bovaird 2005). The influence of the media on governance is neglected or underestimated by traditional conceptual frameworks of political science and public administration, and there are not many theories that include them, along with the state, market and civic sector, as regulators of public affairs... There are more questions than answers: *"We simply lack the means to evaluate and select what is essential in the great flood of unstructured information."* (Hostages of the horizon 2005:20) El Hassan, President of the Club of Rome, asks whether the *"global networking of multimedia has resulted in a public attention deficit disorder that leaves little time for critical inquiry and political action by a permanently distracted audience"*. (ibid)

Thompson's (2004) societal theory of the media represents an important contribution to understanding the interweaving of the market, the state and the media. For him, the present situation is a real threat of uncontrolled distortion of public space by media activities – especially at the global level. He even suggests some remedies that could bring the media out of the influence of both the market and the state and secure pluralism in communication and in public space in general.

The market-state-civic sector-media regulative square is at the core of the conceptual grasp of governance. It represents an enormous challenge for social scientists: *"The problem of mapping influence patterns now seem even greater with the growing interest in the behaviour of 'complex adaptive systems' in which intensive and ever-changing system interactions, with non-linear characteristics, give rise to non-*

predictable but self-organizing outcomes (Haynes, 2003), although it is still unclear how well such models apply to decision-making in the public domain." (Bovaird 2005:218) There is an obvious imbalance between the nation-state's embeddedness and the global operation of the market, the media and, to a non-negligible extent, the civic sector as well. (Thompson 2004:191). *"The Club of Rome-esque approach emphasises alternatives in which global democracy, the global market economy, and a harmonious global civilization (instead of hierarchy of any type) form the only sustainable basis for a politics of humanity. So far these kinds of social limits have been successfully set up only on the level of the nation state and, as such, with limited results. These achievements alone have required several centuries to emerge. What would be the means and joint efforts that could hasten similar progress at a global level?"* (Hostages of the horizon 2005:18)

2.3 Actors' networks and networking

The spread of democracy around the globe in the late 20th century, coupled with an upsurge in the new information and communication technologies, has inspired some scholars to develop the concept of network society, interpreted as the embodiment of a new historical trend: *"Dominant functions and processes in the information age are increasingly organised around networks. (...) The new information technology paradigm provides the material basis for (their) pervasive expansion throughout the entire social structure. (...) Presence or absence in the network and the dynamics of each network vis-à-vis others are critical sources of domination and change in our society."* (Castells 2000:469) No more are the basic units of analysis, the actors, involved in governing processes, but *"...the network, made up of a variety of subjects and organisations, relentlessly modified as networks adapt to supportive environments and market structures."* (ibid, 198) According to Rhodes (1997:15), inter-organisational networks can rely on interdependence, resource exchange, self-organising, respect for the rules of the game, and significant autonomy from the state. Kooiman (2003) distinguishes networks as one type of governance (along with communicative governance, public-private partnerships, and co-management).

Networking is dear to the hearts of the Central and Eastern Europeans: networks (such as Solidarity in Poland) were the political instrument that finally destroyed the tough and rigid hierarchical structures of communist party-states. Thus there is a good deal of understanding for the role of interactive networking in this region. (Kovač 2004:16)

Some authors have coined the term *'policy networks'* (see Bovaird 2005:218) or prefer to speak about *'information networks'*. (El Hassan 2004:1)

Salamon (2002:9) suggests that the network is the opposite of hierarchy and represents one of the differences between new governance (refer to par. 1 of this paper) and classical public administration. The network theory argues that the standard relationship among the actors involved in a network is one of interdependence. Thus no single actor can enforce his/her will upon others. This is due

to the four crucial attributes that commonly characterise policy networks, making the task of network management very demanding:

- their pluriformity – a range of diverse organisations with limited experience cooperating with each other;
- their self-referentiality – each actor has his/her own interests and approaches the relationship with a different set of perspectives and incentives;
- their asymmetric interdependencies;
- their dynamism.

As a consequence, the task of securing concerted actions within networks composed of a plurality of actors becomes a major administrative challenge. (ibid:13)

Better understanding of the place and role of the actors' networks in contemporary governance exposes analysts to one of the major challenges. Without it, one of its key dimensions will be missed.

2.4 *The global ethic*

As values represent the indispensable component of human affairs' steering, there is a legitimate question about the specific values appropriate for strategic governance. As the contemporary world is increasingly interdependent, there is a need for the development of global ethic capable to orientate the activities of myriads of individual and institutional actors... Time and space proximity have ceased to be a relevant indicator of ethical importance. Our responsibility reaches people who are very much remote in time and space from our present deeds: and not only people. It also reaches nature in general, increasingly connected with the fate of humankind (Thompson 2004:209). The Commission on Global Governance hopes for widespread acceptance of a global ethic, namely the *"norms and values that should guide the world, the ethics that should inform life in the global neighbourhood Without them, it will be hard – if not impossible – to establish more effective and legitimate forms of global governance."* (Encyclopaedia 1994 – 5, part 6.2 Governance: providing a strategic framework) *"Real politics postpone resolving the core problems; therefore we need the moral politics, (which could create) moral principles for a dialogue of cultures."* (Makram-Ebeid in Hostages 2004:19). An early but well elaborated concept of global ethic was submitted for public discussion by a leading Czech environmentalist, Josef Vavroušek (1993).

2.5 *Cognitive resources, including education*

The complex and ever-changing tasks of governance cannot be effectively approached without a sound understanding of the problems, opportunities and options in a relevant context. El Hassan (2004:4) speaks about the prominence of the realm of thought and reflection called *'cogitosphere'* in order to focus governance on the real challenges facing humanity. Peters (2003:32) goes even further and suggests the establishment of an institutionalized learning capacity. According to him, learning is difficult for governments and therefore some formalized capacity for the

long-term consideration of policy, and for the development of clear ideas where to go in the longer term must be built into the system. (ibid, 26) Nevertheless, his concept can be broadened and applied to all actors operating in the field of strategic governance. They all are in need of specialised high-quality training.

2.6 Institutional resources, tools

Institutions are defined in a rather broad sense here as norms, rules and organisations. (Kooiman 2003:154n, Heracleous 2005) The institutional arrangements for the strategic dimension of governance should not be developed for their own sake. On the other hand, the existence and operation of specific institutions for strategic decision-making and implementation of strategies forms their indispensable part – and a necessary condition as well.

Peters does not question the importance of building a strategic capacity in government. Dror (2004:17n) suggests that institutions of strategic governance be structured as the *Central Governmental Strategic Brains (SGSBs)* including seven main components:

1. a professional strategic thinking and planning enclave near the head of government;
2. smaller strategic thinking and planning staffs near main future-impacting ministries;
3. good access of these units to top decision-makers and main choice processes;
4. a national research and development organisation (think-tank) developing long-term fundamental policy directions;
5. a professional crisis management unit;
6. similar capacities in parliaments and sub-national levels of governance;
7. a whole system consisting of its interacting, networked parts. Salamon (2002:2;600) characterises this as “an elaborate system ... in which crucial elements of public authority are shared with a host of non-governmental or other-governmental actors... whose participation must often be coaxed and coached, not commandeered and controlled”.

An important, but often neglected part of institution building, is the linkage of the budget process with the rest of the institutional framework of strategic governance. (Ochrana 2005b) “*Budgeting needs to be integrated into the more general aspects of strategic planning and management.*” (Peters undated: 32)

The tools used by strategic governance (defined as methods through which collective actions are structured to address strategic problems – *sensu* Salamon 2002:19) represent an additional relevant institutional framework for further consideration.

As most problems people have to cope with in their lives can no longer be solved at the national level, the supra-national institutional level of strategic governance should not be neglected, even if (and perhaps as) it has not matured to be sufficiently visible and sufficiently effective (see par. 2.1).

2.7 Social capital

"Governance should be understood as a collective capacity to come to a coherent agreement on the way we would like to go visions or goals – as well as the collective capacity to achieve these goals." (Veselý 2004:14) Coping with the future requires concerted collective action, frequently without visible benefits, in some cases even with immediate losses for at least some. Such an action is not manageable without a sufficient level of mutual trust among all the relevant social actors. In other words, social capital is another resource of strategic governance. *"Trust is one coping mechanism by which stakeholders can respond to their perception that they face a growing climate of risk and uncertainty in a context of unequally distributed power.... The building of such trust is now a critical task for public administration."* (Bovaird 2005:224,226)

An alternative approach based on the system of 'checks and balances' countervailing power to multiple stakeholders is functionally cumbersome, and much more expensive.

2.8 Anticipation

The first quality of strategic governance is defined as the capacity to foresee the long-term potential future developments, and thus to be able to react to them in an anticipatory way. El Hassan (2004) characterises the task of strategic governance as *"changing ignorance and the lack of vision into global responsibility and awareness"*. Perri 6 (1997) goes on by pleading for anticipatory government, applying foresight methods and techniques. Kovač (2004:7) stresses the importance of steering strategic economic and social development namely for small countries.

2.9 The 'choice of society'

The second quality of strategic governance is seen in its capacity to induce important changes compared with the way society has been functioning in the past. Some authors call it the *'choice of society'* (Roebroek 1992, Potůček 1999:127); it can be associated with issues considered as prior in public discourse and decision making, with changing competences of different levels of governance, the interface between the state, market, civic sector and media, or the way the horizontal steering links are operating in society. The changes introduced by the Reagan and Thatcher administrations in the USA and the United Kingdom respectively, the transformation of post-communist countries, or the building of the European Union fit well into this category.

2.10 Emerging strategies

There is a third quality of strategic governance, which is not mentioned frequently but which, in my view, is of profound importance for understanding its nature: it can be understood as the negotiated outcome of many interacting policy actors and processes, and called the *'emergent strategies'*. This concept is much better suited

Past experience shows that political support for strategic governance is a necessary but not sufficient condition for asserting this concept in everyday life. Obviously, Miloš Zeman, a former forecaster and prime minister in 1998 – 2002, differed from his predecessors by being an avid proponent of strategic governance. However, not even his support was sufficient for effective promotion of the strategic governance vision in a state apparatus that functioned without adequate

committed itself to honour. them passed by the Czech government long after the expiry of the deadline it had late of three consecutive sustainable development strategies, with only the last of tence, internal strife, and political opportunism. A classic example of this is the clashed, in the local environments, with the wall of misunderstanding, incompe- United Nations (resolutions of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Millennium on sustainable development and fighting global poverty is characteristic of the strength or the support of a knowledge-driven society was a strong impetus. Focus Strategy that attracted domestic actors to topics such as economic competitive regional development, employment policy and social cohesion. The EU's Lisbon terms with requirements for the production of strategic documents in the field of the outset of preparations for joining the EU, this country has had to come to nificant context of developing strategic governance in the Czech Republic. From Clearly, the European Union framework has always been by far the most sig-

Strategic specification from higher level of governance
Extent of political support for strategic governance
Institutional resources (specialised work stations on corresponding public administration level)
Cognitive capacities (analytical and forecasting work stations/agencies)
Social capital (potential participation of civic and expert communities in strategic governance)
Outcomes of strategic efforts

Tab. 1
Evaluation criteria of strategic governance capacity

3. Strategic governance and the Czech Republic

The Centre for Social and Economic Strategies (CESSES) asserted the above theoretical concept of strategic governance in an empirical analysis of its progress in the Czech Republic after 1989. The research outcomes were presented in Czech in a voluminous monograph, Portáček et al. (2007). Let me use selected criteria of evaluation of strategic governance capacity (see Table) to help me briefly summarise our findings.

to real-life processes in the contemporary societies than the notion of 'strategic planning' (Mintzberg 1994).

competences and institutional capacities and under constant pressure from the operative circles. After his departure from the cabinet, even the modest offshoots of these capacities were gradually pruned in the Office of Government (The Council for Social and Economic Strategy, established in 1999, was replaced in 2003 by the Council for Sustainable Development with severely curtailed administrative capacities and powers.).

A sufficient analytical and forecasting base is one of the important prerequisites for strategic governance – examining possible futures as a condition of proper orientation and subsequent decisions. However, two new centres have opened that possess specialist capacities and a measure of experience in the field: the Technology Centre of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, and the Centre for Social and Economic Strategies at the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University. Other research centres have been asserting themselves as bodies analysing relevant problems, such as globalisation and Europeanisation processes, in addition to specialised consulting and advisory agencies focusing on given issues, notably at the regional and municipal levels.

The process of preparing a series of strategic documents on practical governance involved the participation of many experts, civic and commercial sector activists, and citizens interested in public affairs. It must be said that for the most part, their interest exceeded the capacity of authors to systematically process and implement the findings and ideas offered by them; in other words, the existing social participation capital was not fully tapped. The need for proper communication and overall coordination channels was generally underrated.

By and large, the outcomes of strategic efforts in the Czech Republic thus far have been rather modest. On the positive side, the actors participating in strategic governance have been gradually honing their craft as to both the methods at their disposal and the thematic cultivation of problems within this category. We have also discerned considerable interest in strategic governance at the level of some municipalities and recently established regions. There also exists a fairly considerable social and expert strategic governance capital. However, the cons far exceed the pros; including an unenlightened political leadership, the absence of matching organisational structures at the state administration level, poor contents and methodological provisions of strategic control documents, lack of coordination, and above all, the ensuing implementation gap: all strategies worked out and adopted in the Czech Republic to date have been sent off as non-binding platonic appeals, often without clearly defined objectives, implementation deadlines, delineated responsibilities, and definite control mechanisms. At the beginning of the 21st century, the Czech Republic lacks a functional system of strategic governance, which could help prevent many unnecessary social and economic losses, and help the country to quickly overcome the handicap of civilisation backwardness inherited from the wars and totalitarian regimes of the past century.⁴

4 Other post-communist countries fare no better – cf.: Potůček (ed.) (2004).