

Behaviour in Public Administration:

In Search of Foundational Insights

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Abstract

What is the model of the individual that we have in mind when we talk about public managers, civil servants, bureaucrats and public administration? What are the ontological traits of these models? We explore the micro-foundations of administrative behaviour by mobilizing different complementary disciplines. In our narrative of micro-foundations, we encounter varieties of the *homo oeconomicus*, from full rationality to bounded rationality, the *homo discentis* who learns inferentially, and the *homo emotionalis*. We wrap up the insights of these micro-foundations to carve out the traits of the *homo faber*, and discuss some implications for public management and administrative reforms.

Keywords: Micro-foundations, Rationality, Learning, Behaviour, Emotions

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1 Introduction

What are the motivations, preferences, and values that inform the behaviour of a public manager? What is essential and unique about a civil servant? This question is wide – practically it takes us to the foundational ideas about what public administration is. Even the terminology we use has its own implications. If we say “civil servant” instead of “public manager” or “bureaucrat”, for example, we borrow some presuppositions about why public administration exists – to serve the state and the citizen, to manage processes efficiently, or to follow routines.

One way to deal with such a huge question is to make hypotheses about the ideal-typical foundations of individual behaviour. To reason ideal-typically means that we identify a few properties of the individual we are interested in. We do so by abstracting from the infinite variety of individuals in different real-world types of public administration, and we search for what is foundational, in terms of properties, about the phenomenon – even if in reality we may not find an individual with exactly these *properties*. In other words, we develop ontological hypotheses about the micro-foundations of public administration (PA). This is in a sense one of the key missions of this volume, that is, to get to the core of administrative phenomena and public governance by mobilizing a vast range of complementary traditions and disciplines, including the humanities. For sure, an interrogation on the nature of the individual triggers a vast array of propositions from the philosophy of public administration (Ongaro, 2020) to psychology, experimental economics, public policy and of course administrative sciences.

Micro-foundations are the core individual-level properties of agents. Of course, individuals then interact in groups within PA. They are constrained by organizational roles. Institutions and rules determine which groups and organizations can do what, when, and how in the policy process and more generally in governance processes. In turn, individuals that make up the public administration interact with other individuals with different micro-foundations, like elected politicians, citizens, pressure groups, and international organizations. But the story must start somewhere, and in this chapter our story starts with the ontology of the ideal-typical *homo* we find in public administration.

In the remainder, we will provide different versions of the story. To begin with, there is a story about economic motivations, costs and benefits, utility, efficiency and so on. Max Weber provided the ideal-type of a public manager that is motivated by efficiency – impassionate and precise, mindful of standard operating procedures and the rules of the game in the bureaucracy. This ontology can be developed in various ways: as perfectly rational *homo oeconomicus*, or the boundedly rational *satisficer* of Herbert Simon, and the puzzling and learning individual of Hugh Heclo. Indeed, there is an important story about cognition and learning: the story of the learning individual, the *homo discentis*, goes beyond costs, benefits, and efficiency calculations. Yet this is still a homo that proceeds inferentially, with some important and quite fundamental traits of rationality, logic, and calculation in the observable behaviour.

To make things more complicated, but at the same time more realistic, we also have to tell a story about emotions – in this story, Weber is turned upside down, because emotions tell the mind what to do, not vice versa. With emotions we no longer see an inferential brain driving behaviour, like for example in the *homo discentis*. Some emotions are pre-cognitive, impulsive, fast responses to *stimuli*. This emotional component adds warmth and passion to the ontology of the individual we are exploring. One important point we shall make is that the different ontologies are present together in administrative behaviour. Hence, we need to bring all the stories together to find a proper conclusion of our journey.

Indeed, in the conclusions we shall gather these multiple ontologies into the label of *homo faber*. The *homo faber* is not the *homo politicus* – we will reason – because the main motivation in public administration is not to win elections. This does not imply that in the civil service individuals do not think politically about their mission, departments and the policies they manage. But, as we shall see, the micro-foundations of public managers are different.

An important caveat is that we do not want to take a normative stance: we are motivated by the desire to prove that one *homo* is better than others, or that there *should be* some necessary properties of the public manager. Our aim is rather to capture

the essential character of individual behaviour. The result intends to be a multifaceted yet unitary account of the multiple ontologies that characterize the public manager.

Once we have done that, and we have talked about the complexity of the *homo faber*, we shall move to the implications for public administration and administrative reforms in the conclusions.

2 Setting the stage: Field and research questions

Although this may sound trivial, we start by noting that the public administration (PA) is populated by public managers. Hence, it makes sense to raise general questions about the foundational assumptions we make about the ideal-typical public manager. To motivate this focus on the ontological nature the public manager, we also espouse a branch of sociological institutionalism that sees institutions as inhabited organizations: “Institutions such as bureaucracy are inhabited by people and their interactions [...] [they] are not inert categories of meaning; rather they are populated with people whose social interactions suffuse institutions with local force and significance” (Hallett and Ventresca 2006, 213).

We start our inquiry, hence, by asking in general terms:

Who is the (ideal-typical) public manager?

As mentioned in the Introduction, we focus on three types, or three brains, or three ways of thinking about how public managers behave – the *homo oeconomicus*, the *homo discentis* and the *homo emotionalis*. We will draw on general theories of decision-making, not specific public administration theories (although all of these theories have been heavily applied to the PA). This choice allows to fish into the big pond of *models of man* (to paraphrase Simon, today we would say *models of the individual*) developed in the social sciences and the humanities.

It follows that ours is a *study of being*, if we want to dig into the philosophical, or a *study of agency in the PA*, if we want to be more pragmatic. But, what *being*? Which *agent*? If,

as we said above, we accept there is something like a public administration where the jobs, ethos and values of bureaucrats are generated and cultivated, we have to have some ideas in mind about the public manager. Historically, these ideas have come by answering two overarching, yet simple questions about the PA as an inhabited institution:¹

What are the major *models of individual* that have historically emerged in the administrative sciences when it comes to the characterization of a key inhabitant of the real-world PA, that is, the public manager?

What are the ontological traits of these models? Or, in other words, what are the micro-foundations of the different models of individual agents that underpin behaviour?

3 Micro-foundations

To answer the above questions, we make at least one important assumption based on methodological individualism, that is, we ask the reader to reason with us in terms of micro-foundations. Micro-foundations, we believe, their characterization, qualification and eventual aggregation, are necessary conceptual and analytical steps for the study of social and collective action.

In the Introduction we said that individuals work in groups, organizations, and political institutions. True. But to understand collective action and aggregate levels of analysis, we must first start from empirically robust models of individual motivation and behaviour, and only after this step, one can engage in the problem of aggregating these models and evaluating group/social dynamics, decision-making and outcomes. To be

¹ Before starting, we acknowledge that theoretical models are useful tools to make sense of complex empirical realities (by simplifying and somewhat dumbing them out), hence our own syncretic unitary model of *homo faber* may be over-specified and prove of little help for supporting empirical analysis. Yet, we find hard to imagine an individual, let alone a public manager, who acts only upon her full or bounded rationality, learning needs or other emotional drivers. The empirical reality imposes us to reckon that all of these ontologies co-habit in the public manager – for difficult it may make empirical analysis. And for difficult it makes theorizing. As we shall see in a while.

clear, our position draws on methodological individualism, but it is far from assuming that collective action and outcomes are the mere sum of individual behaviours. We do not discount the so-called problem of aggregation (see Kamkhaji and Radaelli 2022). Yet, here we focus on comparing and discussing different micro-foundational models with the aim of finding common grounds - and possibly integrating different models in a unitary view.

Micro foundations are hence key assumptions about the cognition and behaviour of individuals. Let us begin our journey by exploring the micro-foundations of the first of our *homines*.

4 The *Homo Oeconomicus*

When it comes to micro-foundations, economics is the social science which more heavily employs this concept, and methodically infuses macro-level research with micro-models of behaviour. Macro outcomes are often considered the sum of the choices and behaviour of so-called representative agents (read as: the typical agent, e.g. the typical household, the typical firm, the typical consumer, or investor. For our purposes, we will focus on the typical decision-maker within the PA). The representative agent, according to economics, is, a bit tautologically, the *homo oeconomicus (HE)*.

In the hardcore/pure Adam Smith version, the *HE* possesses full/perfect rationality. “Full” in the sense of being able to calculate the pay-offs of a vast range of alternative courses of action, and order them in terms of the utility they bring to the agent. Decisions, in the end, are solved computationally, by calculating which course of action brings the highest expected return (utility) to the agent. The *HE* is eminently and entirely self-interested, engages in (constrained) utility maximization, and has such things as perfect foresight (Bray 1990). Alongside multiple applications in fields such as economics, finance and management, the *HE* has latitude also in the study of the PA. Historically, the transposition of the *HE* as underpinning public decision makers came in three fashions.

First, there is the rather faithful impression of the perfectly rational *HE* featuring in rational choice models (Becker 1976). In fact, the self-interested utility maximizer lies also at the heart of rational choice theorizations of the PA. Among them, perhaps the purest form of *HE* can be found in public choice theory (Tullock and Buchanan 1965). Noticeably, the fully rational and fully self-interested bureaucrat of public choice is not moved by drivers different than those of the Smithian butchers, brewers, and bakers. She also has also a fully individualistic view of the collective, whereby public interest is an artifact composed of the aggregation of individual/group (partisan) interests. The equilibrium is typically found on Pareto-efficiency grounds.

A somewhat milder version features in public finance theories (Musgrave and Peacock 1958). In fact, when this *HE* faces collective action problems within the PA, drawing on a perfect rationality framework, she still does engage in utility maximization, but not in *individual maximization*. She rather maximizes *social utility*. Whereas public choice collective action is a grand bargain among self-interested actors who struggle to fulfil their individual preferences (possibly supporting social welfare through invisible hand effects), in public finance collective action overtly aims at social utility. Since the assumptions of full rationality and perfect foresight are retained, the ideal-typical public manager of public finance is a benevolent or socio-tropic *HE* who, by using taxes to stabilize, allocate and redistribute, maximizes on a collective utility curve given a collective budget constraint.

Perfect foresight and information are the core assumptions that allow this benevolent, collectivist *planner* to optimize the allocation of scarce resources to reach full employment. When carefully guided by this version of the *HE*, the economy reaches the state of general equilibrium. The same assumptions made with micro-foundations allow us to follow equilibrium-seeking decisions that are first individual, then in markets, and finally across the whole economy. Interestingly, this *HE* may be naturally socio-tropic or benevolent, or she may be so because she acts behind a Rawlsian veil of ignorance. Yet, introducing a veil of ignorance is a crack to the perfect rationality vase (and an informational tragedy to the central planner). If information is not full, also rationality

risks not to be. The two models (self-interested vs. benevolent or socio-tropic) are antithetic in terms of their profound motivations of behaviour (Buchanan and Musgrave 1999) but agree on perfect rationality, which, as we said and shall see, proves to be problematic.

The first reactions against the HE perfect rationality are internal to economics. The Austrian school embraces a philosophical approach where information and rationality need not to be perfect to reach an equilibrium in a decentralised order like that of perfectly competitive markets. Behavioural economics instead has an inductive take, where choices *are* revealed preferences and full rationality gets empirically disproved again and again in the most disparate experimental settings (Gerrard 1993).

But those disciplines that reacted more forcefully and meaningfully to the perfect rationality totem are administrative science (to which we now turn) and public policy analysis (we will talk about the latter in the next section). Pioneered by Herbert Simon (1955), the framework of bounded rationality is nowadays foundational for the study of decisions in the PA. The boundedly rational public manager is first of all *Socratic* in that she is aware that her cognition is fallible and biased. She also knows that her knowledge (information) is far from being complete or perfect – but even if it would be, her rationality may not be able to process it efficiently.

For Simon, it is impossible to ask the human brain to calculate the alternative pay-offs of a sufficiently wide range of alternative courses of action. Uncertainty and limited computational ability make this not feasible. This pragmatic way of thinking about decisions takes us to the core question whether we are still talking about the HE or not. The answer is yes: a boundedly-rational individual is still *oeconomicus* in the sense that she prefers more than less. Her preferences are monotonic. The motivation is still to get as much as possible. Yet maximization is impossible. Therefore, this individual is content with *satisficing* (rather than maximizing) behaviour. The search for alternative courses of action is stopped when there is a satisfying level of utility, given the uncertainty of the context and computational limitations to comprehend, describe and analyse the mind. Instead of comparing all options, the agent takes the first decision

that passes a sort of acceptability test, a viable second best. Importantly, instead of tackling rationality, Simon points to informational deficiency. Ontologically, however, we have not shifted to another ground.

And yet: by pointing to the cognitive skills of agents, Simon opens an important pathway to learning. If agents do not have full information on the world and take decisions on the basis of satisficing criteria, they will learn from past mistakes. The public manager observes the outcomes of decisions taken with bounded rationality – the world provides new information continuously. Reflecting on the changing state of the world, the public manager adapts expectations. The comparison between past expectations and actual realizations opens the door to learning as micro-foundation. It is then to the *homo discentis* that we now turn. Here we will find the contribution of policy analysis.

5 The Homo Discentis

Learning as micro-foundation of behaviour is particularly important in public policy analysis, as shown by the family tree of policy learning (Dunlop, Radaelli and Trein, 2018). This is also because the opening to the psychological/cognitive dimension marked by the bounded rationality revolution is nowadays a standard feature of much public policy and policy process research. Scholars like Karl Deutsch and Hugh Hecló start from the observation that when optimization is not possible, decisions in public administration and more generally public governance are taken in a context of radical uncertainty. As a result of this (Knightian) uncertainty, no single actor can calculate what decision will increase her power. Instead of powering, actors in public administration react to the complexity and uncertainty of the environment by puzzling (Hecló 1974): public administration is an order of things where individuals constantly wonder about *how to solve problems*, so to speak. And, consequently, taking decisions in public administration becomes a problem of learning.

Learning is central in policy theories also because it accommodates ambiguity, as well as uncertainty. Ambiguity means that participants change across time, the search for alternative courses of action takes place in different fora, problems are constantly

redefined, and solutions are combined with the changing nature of problems (Zahariadis 2016).

Importantly, if uncertainty and the computational limitations of humans can be addressed by smart and big data or re-organizations, ambiguity is there to stay in the world of public decisions. It is not a variable that can be reduced to zero. Politics and administration 'breathe' ambiguity. Here is an example. A problem may start being addressed in a government department; then questions are asked in Parliament and the issue becomes politicised; a scandal revealed by the press may give the problem a different connotation; economic pressure groups may appear with their own solutions to the problem, whilst experts carry out the search for solutions in technical institutions like independent regulatory agencies; incoming elections may modify the expectations of lead departments and the core executive; international organizations may chip in with their 'best practice' and 'reviews', suggesting options that had not been considered before. All this is ambiguity: problems, participants, solutions are randomly combined and re-arranged in what is called a garbage can-like process (Cohen, March and Olsen 1972).

The dyadic nature of this new (administrative) "man", a boundedly rational agent in an environment of ambiguous collective problems, does not only fit bounded rationality but it also envisages that information and foresight are far from complete or perfect. As a result, a public decision maker is one that continuously processes new and old information (Jones 2017) and, crucially, learns out of them and changes behaviour thereof – also in contingent and non-fully inferential ways (Kamkhaji and Radaelli 2017 – see also the following section).

In terms of stability and equilibrium, learning takes us far away from homeostatic equilibria. It does not imply going back to the previous points of equilibrium in the system. Learning in public policy is the capacity to pursue changing goals. This is an important property of the public manager, especially in a fast-changing environment and under conditions of crisis. Indeed, the kind of learning that Deutsch has in mind is similar to the zigzagging of the rabbit in a field, contingent but self-aware. The rabbit

moves from one place to another in a field and re-assesses where to go on the basis of the new point of observation, the things that can be seen and evaluated from the newly-acquired position. What was good-enough, or satisfying, before may no longer be good now.

This learning environment chimes with Hecló's maze in which the walls are re-patterned all the time; individuals are bound in groups acting together; the group disagrees on how to get out of the maze and more fundamentally on whether getting out is the best solution to the problem; there are many groups, not just one, inside the maze, and each group keeps getting in each other's way (Hecló, 1974: 308). Clearly, learning belongs to a complex world, more complex than the world of HE. But we can still theorize decisions in this world of complexity and ambiguity. This is the message of learning theories.

Specifically, learning brings us to a new model of the individual, that is, the *homo discentis* (HD), who is empowered by knowing (call it, *homo sapiens*?). To quote Dunlop and Radaelli's approach to the micro-foundations of learning (2018, p. 6), "within learning as framework, *Homo discentis* – the learning, studying and practicing person – is at the heart of all policy-making. No matter what policy environment we operate in, what our role or standpoint, whether we work alone or in a collective, learning is the governing dynamic of our activities. Learning is how people make sense of the world".

But one can go further and take learning as full-blown ontology of policy making -an ontology that complements the classic power-based understanding of politics and political science as a study of power in society (Lasswell 1936). In this ontological view, learning becomes a systemic and ubiquitous trait of policy-making, implicit and inherent to any form of social interaction, and even more so to any set of policy interactions. This reminds us that policy-making is commonly intended as "a knowledge-intensive process, long associated with concepts of learning." (Hall 1993, p. 277).

According to this ontological perspective, in every domain of policy making and in every policy process, new knowledge is always created by and diffused among actors, because of interaction or new evidence becoming available. The creation and exchange of knowledge spawned by policy interactions, crucially, is not an extrinsic feature of the policy process but an immanent one. One can argue that learning takes place systematically, *regardless* of its causal effect on the policy process – *regardless* also because this is what each homo sapiens does when facing ambiguous decisions. Accepting the banal truism of learning being a legitimate overarching and immanent aspect of knowledge-based social interaction in general, and of a markedly knowledge-intensive process like policy-making in particular, renders us a vivid picture of the HD and the differences with respect to the various qualifications of the HE discussed above.

Learning further implies bounded rationality and accommodates both self- and collective interest perspectives (learning can be political, sociotropic, or individualistic). But still, even the HD it is not a radical departure from rational models of cognition and behaviour. Decisions are still taken by individuals that reason on what they observe. These individuals are information processors. Or, in a milder form, they are Bayesian explorers: they keep on making inferences and adjust their prior probabilities about the state of the world when they see new evidence. Crucially, they make decisions with their thinking, reasoning mind, not with pre-cognitive impulses, instinctive reactions to events, and, in one word, emotions. Now, is this always true? Or do emotions play a role in public decisions, choices made in public administration, and ultimately the behaviour of public managers? Indeed, the story can carry on with emotions, as we shall see in the next section.

6 The Homo Emotionalis

So far, we have reviewed two broad models of the individual that can help us figure out the micro-foundations of the bureaucracy. We told different stories. A foundational story comes from economics, with the HE. By means of evolution and permutations, different variations of HE took us to the story of cognition and learning: HD entered the scene and is here to stay, in administrative sciences as well as in theories of the policy process.

The HE does not necessarily have to be a selfish individual / utility maximizer – we have seen socio-tropic variations in public economics for example. Bounded rationality kicked in with a story of a more self-aware HE but also paving the way for a more complex (yet realistic) model of individual action: the HD.

That being said, also the HD micro-foundation comes with its own problems. Although the HD is aware of bounded rationality, her puzzling/information processing/learning sequence is as neat as the story says and, most importantly, it is not what we see in empirical settings, especially in crisis conditions (see our previous work: Kamkhaji and Radaelli 2017; Radaelli 2022). As we want our models to be empirically robust at the micro level and applicable to crisis situations (after all, today we say we live in a world of poli-crisis and crisis as the new normal),² we have hence to accept that policy learning, as theorised so far, is an abstract post-hoc observational modelling of one of the most ubiquitous individual cognitive processes. In reality, the true empirical story of learning is one of fast, pre-cognitive reactions to stimuli. Beliefs do not change under conditions of crisis (Kamkhaji and Radaelli 2017) - yet behaviour does. Decisions are taken, but not on the basis of inferential reasoning about evidence. Not on the basis of the adjustment of priors on the basis of what is observed and learned. So, what could be triggering these behavioral changes?

Enter emotions, or the story of the *homo emotionalis* (HEM). Yet again, we start from the basics. Individual behaviour is for sure explained by emotions, as shown by a vast literature in psychology. Yet emotions are completely absent from the models that assume rationality as a general framework of action. The HE foundations dominant in economics and part of political science and public administration can become blinkers. They do not allow us to ‘see’ the role of emotions. And once we widen our peripheral view to see emotions, the question appears whether emotions are after all so ‘irrational’. Actually, emotions can build rational, efficient decisions (Haidt 2012).

² The pre-eminence of the puzzling dimension for the public manager can also be anchored to the observation that historically, and increasingly so, bureaucratic action is also called to stop crises and solve all sorts of failures.

One way to explore the story of emotions is to add them to the HD. To go back one more time to crisis conditions, some authors have spoken of associative learning, Precisely, “associative learning is thought to be fast acting, automatic, and would require little cognitive resources to act” (Morís et al. 2014: 77–8). This insight, strongly supported by empirical evidence, leads us to acknowledge the presence of emotions like fear (for example: of financial markets), contempt (of corrupt politicians), empathy (for refugees), and anger (for wrong decisions). Emotions are an empirically verifiable and often efficient triggers or mechanism of decision making (see the literature cited in Haidt 2012).

This is then our final micro-foundations: the *homo emotionalis*. This model is innovative because it integrates rather than excluding the multiple ontologies that underpin the bureaucracy. Importantly, emotions are also part of cognition. They can be considered evolutionary mechanisms developed to perfect behavioural responses under specific circumstances. Think of the importance of emotion regulation for everyday’s individual and organizational life. In terms of micro-foundational thinking, it has been recently found that conscious awareness, the foundation of rationality and inferential learning, may well be a post-hoc cognitive product rather than the standard way we process information and behave upon it: “Well before conscious awareness becomes available, the human brain can and does considerable preconscious processing of sensory and interoceptive inputs” (Sawada et al., 2022, cited in Marcus 2023). The investigation of emotions can lead us further, into the realms of literature for example, where so many novels have puzzled and explored the many ways in which emotions “decide” behaviour and the whole trajectory of life. Similarly, emotional responses to arts go beyond the simple stimuli-response patterns and indeed hinge, and are possibly part of, the preconscious ontology that underpins the *HEM*.

The findings on emotions have dramatic implications for the models we reviewed so far as they all see rationality as a basic framework for behaviour: indeed, rationality may well be a normative ex-post reconstruction of decision-making rather than the fruit of a faithful process-based of cognition and behaviour (Haidt 2012). If conscious awareness is not instantaneous, this may imply that pre-rational cognitive mechanisms such as

emotions and associative processes may be influencing rationality, or what we think it is, in ways that are far detached from our current understanding of it. As Marcus (2023, 4) puts it: “Research in the neurosciences challenges the long-held normative view that consciousness is the preferred platform for judgment. It does so because conscious awareness is not capable of executing the normative imperatives long thought to be reasoning’s responsibility (Bechara et al., 1997; Pinker, 2021). Consciousness is a platform that is very limited in its ability to construe the world. That diminishes the importance of subjective feeling states in as much as many of the actions humans undertake are deftly executed well before the conscious availability of feeling states (Zajonc, 1980; Hoffman, 2019)”.

7 Conclusions: Homo Faber

We can wrap up our different stories now. Our position is not that there is a single dominant micro-foundation. Rather, a realistic model of the individual takes into account all the varieties we have reviewed – and possibly more. In public administration, there is room for rational calculations of costs and benefits, but also for evidence-informed policy and emotional reactions to events or triggers.

And so, forget Max Weber – at least, forget his argument about a single ideal-type of bureaucrat. After all, Weber was interested in what the civil servant should be, not in describing different types of individuals inside a bureaucracy. Moving beyond Weber then, we argue that robust explanations of administrative behaviour need a unitary micro-foundational consideration or perspective of the ‘administrative man’ if not a unitary ‘model’ – if by model we mean a technical /mathematical formulation of hypotheses and conjectures.

In empirical research, this unitary view must take into account the transition from micro-foundations to group and macro aggregates. We, as society, can use science against a pandemic to avoid political contestations of decisions (HE) and learn incrementally (HD) even if individually we are scared (HEM). Policy-makers in office can change the public narrative about vaccines that reach individuals (HEM) to increase

the take up of vaccinations in a community and, arguably, generate popularity gains for the incumbent (HE). We can leverage the individual fear of inflation “eating up the purchasing power of my salary” (HEM) to promote collective austerity policies that create inequalities (HE). The models take us on a journey, not to a single episode.

Two important questions arise. First, are the micro-foundations in hierarchical order? This is difficult for us to answer, although we acknowledge that in psychology the debate is alive, arguably with a tendency to put emotions on top. The elephant guides the rider, like in the famous book by Haidt (2012). Yet the rider may learn something about emotions regulation, and use some degrees of HD and HE to tame the elephant, as shown by the public policy interventions inspired by behavioural insights (Sunstein and Thaler).

Second, what is distinctive characteristic of the *homo* in the bureaucracy? Is the public manager a variety of the *homo politicus*? In an important contribution, Boda (2013) talks about the anthropology of the *homo politicus*. The politician can be selfish or socio-tropic, Boda argues. If motivated by public / social concerns, the *homo politicus* leverages calculations, learning and emotional triggers to obtain gains for the audience she cares the most. This audience can be the political party, or the government, or the country of the *homo politicus*.

This core motivation cannot be applied to the public manager mechanically. Bureaucrats do not necessarily work with the aim to serve the interests of a party or an electoral district. They are not re-elected, hence they do not have a pre-defined audience or manifesto to implement. For this reason, our ideal-typical bureaucrat is not, quintessentially, a *homo politicus*. We would rather like to think of a *homo faber*. A public manager with a ‘can do’ attitude, that is in control of rationality, cognition, and emotions. Rather than colliding, the three elements can be leveraged to improve on public decisions and public policy. Rather than succumbing to emotions, the *homo faber* has the skills and the power to exercise emotional regulation in the design and implementation of public policy. With this observation, we realize we have gone far from our empirical intent, and moved into a normative dimension of what the

bureaucracy should do and for whom. This is a very interesting line of research that can be usefully pursued in the future.

Flying back down on earth from the normative sky, we can point to practical implications for administrative behaviour and reforms. One is that all the major applications of artificial intelligence that are on the table for the foreseeable future should be designed by acknowledging that both bureaucrats and citizens are also HEM. Emotions should matter more in the design of chat-bots - for example. Imagine the difference between an empathic chat-bot and a purely HE chat-both. Diagnosing fear and apprehension can be crucial in delivering a service online to a citizen.

Another implication is about how to reduce red tape in public administration. All too often we forget that what makes an administrative obligation a burden is not the time it takes to comply with it, but its irritability, its lack of consideration of the citizen, its stupidity (ref). The *homo emotionalis* feels and judges when a form is sensible and when it becomes a burden, even keeping time-related and cognitive complexity-related variables constant.

Finally, in their public communication about policies, public administrations should be in control of the emotional content of their narratives. One thing is to tell a story about migrants or innovation. Another is to tell an emotional story that involves and transports the audience. The emotional dimension can make a difference in terms of delivery and implementation, but it is forgotten by the impersonal bureaucratic language that still dominates how public administration communicates with companies and citizens.

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