



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

**Stable Leadership: Adapting to New Realities of Governance:  
Behavioural Stratagem to Address Challenges of Bureaucratic  
Insubordination in Public Institutions in Poland**

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**Citation**

Grabowski, F. (2024). *Stable Leadership: Adapting to New Realities of Governance: Behavioural Stratagem to Address Challenges of Bureaucratic Insubordination in Public Institutions in Poland*.

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3728681>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

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s3823768

Master Thesis

05 Jan 2024

PA: Public Management & Leadership

Dr. Joris van der Voet

Word count: 23178

# **Stable Leadership: Adapting to New Realities of Governance**

Behavioural Stratagem to Address Challenges of Bureaucratic  
Insubordination in Public Institutions in Poland

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## **1. Introduction**

To accomplish policy tasks, political leaders and executives entrust bureaucrats who possess specialised knowledge. In doing so, they face the potential loss of control over policy formulation and execution. This becomes problematic if bureaucrats hold differing preferences from their superiors (Tholen, 2004; O’Leary, 2017). Bureaucrats are individuals within public administration and governing systems, hired to carry out daily procedures and manage policy implementation (Aberbach, Putnam & Rockman, 1981). With progressing decentralisation and changing institutional landscape, executives must adapt to new realities of governance. As either publicly or institutionally elected individuals, they hold office for a designated term to facilitate their agenda and implement their policy points (Cook, 1998). However, with self-will and insubordination arising internally in public institutions among bureaucrats, giving way to policy divergence from the elected leader, there is a need for responses with appropriate behaviour. The study objective of this research is to examine how leaders in public institutions behave in face of insubordination under modern governing conditions where decentralisation, outsourcing and market-based reasoning are major factors. It aims to establish how executives act and what behaviours they employ to manage bureaucratic insubordination in a specific case of Polish sub-national institutions, contributing to an academically underrepresented institutional setting. It develops the established knowledge base on these behaviours by presenting new findings and testing theoretical assumptions.

### **1.1 From Centralisation to Discretionary Governance**

The presence of a central figure with a high level of power and discretion is a base characteristic of public, governmental institutions. Such a paradigm is often referred to as the Old Public Administration model (OPA) by Torfing (2020) and his co-authors. Drawing on Weberian ideas, this traditional approach is founded upon the dual tenets of hierarchy and meritocracy. It centralises authority, establishes uniform regulations, and delineates the process of formulating policies from their execution, exemplified by figures, such as mayors and governors, functioning as a main overseer and a linchpin between administrative functionality and policy implementation (Svara, 2001). The primary emphasis is on operational efficiency. This methodology exerts widespread influence over bureaucratic systems. Nonetheless, numerous systems experience a reduction in efficacy stemming from a weakening of the merit-based appointment principle. Reformation policies, however, adhere to the established paradigm, as it exhibits a positive correlation with economic advancement. Instead, the reforms aim to rationalise the bureaucracy, with the objective of rendering it more compact, cost-effective, and operationally proficient. This resulted in the emergence of so-called New Public Management (NPM). The NPM approach marked a response to the limitations of the traditional model. Its fundamental components encompass competition, delegation, performance, and responsiveness. It incorporates novel managerial principles from the private sector, frequently outsourcing core services to private entities (Indahsari & Raharja, 2020). NPM reforms have

predominantly been of a sedimented nature, bringing incremental changes rather than full system reformation.

While the OPA system is characterised by a centralisation of authority, today's system is based upon democratic principles underpinning the prevailing ethos of governance on the global political landscape (Sarkawi & Ainuddin, 2023; Bardhan, 2002). NPM encompasses not only the adoption of fresh strategic directions and goals for public sector entities, but also entails alterations in their internal frameworks and operations, with one of the crucial organisational objective being *“decentralisation in order to achieve more flexible structures and less hierarchy”* (Diefenbach, 2009, p. 897). While the concept of NPM may appear promising in theory, in practice, it often falls short of its official agenda. Implementation of NPM-driven change management initiatives typically results in limited decentralisation, primarily affecting operational, less crucial, or unpopular areas (Pollitt, 1990). Additionally, efforts to establish operationally decentralised units are coupled with simultaneous endeavours to heighten centralised control over strategy and policy. This, however, does not negate the reformulation of the old model into a modern principal-agent framework - the model plays a pivotal role in reshaping governance dynamics within public institutions. This involves the delegation of authority from principals (typically elected officials) to agents (bureaucrats or administrators) to carry out specific tasks on their behalf (Cook, 1998). In the context of NPM, this delegation aims to enhance efficiency and effectiveness by creating a clearer line of responsibility and accountability. However, it can also lead to a paradoxical situation where while there is an emphasis on decentralisation of tasks and responsibilities, there is a concurrent effort to maintain centralised control over broader policy and strategic decisions (Carpenter & Krause, 2014). This dynamic reflects the tension between decentralisation for operational efficiency and the need for centralised oversight to ensure alignment with the broader goals and vision of the institution. The principal-agent framework, therefore, becomes a crucial tool in navigating this delicate balance between decentralisation, control and responsibility delegation in the realm of public institutions. As NPM introduces a great degree of decentralisation by prioritising outsourcing, delegation and responsiveness, the function of central public leadership figures experience a drastic shift in terms of power, function and accountability (OECD, 2001). Political leaders, like governors or mayors, encounter different challenges and opportunities which have to be tackled accordingly. In the modern realities, they need to manage new challenges from external forces and lower-level bureaucrats and administrators, who no longer act according to the OPA paradigm (Hart & Tummers, 2019; Torfing et al., 2020).

## **1.2 Challenges to Public Leadership**

With the fading influence of OPA, a new challenge emerges from within bureaucracy itself. In the realm of public leadership, the paramount consideration lies in addressing internal bureaucratic insubordination, stemming from decentralisation and increased discretion to lower-level bureaucrats

(Radtke, 2022). The phenomenon of bureaucratic discretion, as delineated by Rutz, Mathew, Robben, and de Bont (2017), empowers unelected policy experts within a bureaucracy, granting them significant authority in policy implementation. Lipsky (2010) illuminates the individual-level activities of bureaucrats, who may wield their discretion to advance personal interests, potentially conflicting with the overarching goals of their superiors. This internal dynamic introduces a unique and pivotal dimension to leadership within public organisations. This core variable requires astute management and strategic acumen from leaders in the public sector. While public figures hold a prominent position in policy implementation, they are also under pressure to align with public sentiment (Pétry, 2007). This alignment is particularly vital in the post-OPA paradigm, where leaders must navigate the complexities of representative roles (Druckman & Jacobs, 2010). They must contend with legal constraints, established to maintain a balance of power (Da Ros & Taylor, 2021). These checks and balances aim to ensure institutional accountability and prevent any single branch from becoming too dominant. However, they also impede effective policy development, hampered by external forces and internal insubordination (Pauwelyn, Wessel & Wouters, 2014). Bureaucratic discretion, wielded by unelected policy experts, grants significant authority in policy implementation (Rutz et. al., 2017). Literature emphasises a division between street-level bureaucrats and their superiors, portraying the higher layers in street-level bureaucracies as a unified group dedicated to organisational objectives (Keulemans & Groeneveld, 2019). This internal dynamic challenges the leaders' management of bureaucratic subordination.

Public leaders must embody their role as a figurehead, while following the norms of NPM that decentralise their authority and empower lower-level bureaucrats, hindering their ability to achieve desired policy outcomes due to motivations of subordinates and external socio-political factors (Dür, 2018; Muldoon-Smith & Sandford, 2021). In the NPM paradigm, leaders do not have a monopoly on power, defined as the “*capacity to influence people’s attitudes, beliefs and behaviour*” (Turner, 2005, p. 4). While they fulfil a leadership role, the majority of policy-implementation processes occur with their subordinate bureaucrats who are responsible for carrying out the policy plan in a feasible and realistic manner. According to Svara (2001) the expertise and principles of those actively engaged in the day-to-day operations of government serve to augment the expertise and principles of those ultimately responsible for shaping the direction of government and ensuring its steadfast adherence to that course. He concludes on the importance of the cooperation in policy-making, stating that “*complementarity of politics and administration holds that elected officials and administrators - both in regular communication with citizens - need and help each other in a partnership for governance*” (Svara, 2001, p. 180). This however, poses a problem of limited authority and control over the process of policy implementation, namely how to ensure that it is indeed carried out in accordance with the vision of the political executive (Huber & Shipan, 2011).

A degree of diversion from the original policy plan is a natural phenomena, which occurs due to expertise of administrators and bureaucrats, and the feasibility of introducing a policy in its original

form (O’Leary, 2017). However, such divergence may also occur due to individual preferences and motivations. Schuster (2021) and co-authors called it the “guerilla bureaucracy” - when public bureaucrats, entrusted with specific functions, deviate from superiors' directives. Like its warfare-inspired counterpart, guerrilla bureaucracy studies the power dynamics among stakeholders. With internal insubordination in the form of bureaucratic discretion, political executives must cope with challenges to their policy plans (Adler, 2018). Under the term of bureaucratic insubordination, it encompasses bureaucrats’ divergence or even abstinence from designated tasks, induced by personal motivations of various origins. It poses vital questions about the resilience and opposition faced by elected leaders in pursuing policy agendas. It is an underrepresented piece of information in the literature, exploring how response or behaviour of political executives depend on such acts.

### **1.3 Focus of the Research**

Aiming to explore how executives respond to bureaucratic insubordination, this work uses the established theoretical taxonomy of Yukl (2012) that encompasses 4 meta-categories of leadership behaviours - Task-oriented, Relations-oriented, Change-oriented and External - and subordinate traits, attempting to unravel how they are employed to navigate those difficulties. The investigation is set in the environment of public institutions in Poland. Poland is an interesting case study, due to the very polarised political environment between right and left wing ideologies, not only among society, but also within public institutions where different bureaucrats and administrators have their own political affiliations. With recent parliamentary elections in 2023, the tensions between political ideologies are still high, as sub-national arenas have to adjust to new political realities, following the establishment of a new government (Zerka, 2023). Therefore public leaders may find it difficult to transform their regime into a more left-leaning one, while their administrators are entrenched in past ideologies or vice versa. Exploring how leaders navigate those challenges is a valuable addition to the current knowledge base, linking studies on bureaucratic discretion and leadership behaviours on a basis of causal chain, exploring how the latter responds to the first. It will do so, by attempting to answer the following main research question:

- *How do executives in public institutions behave when responding to acts of bureaucratic insubordination?*

It will be supported by the accompanying sub-question, underpinning the importance of behavioural balance in this research:

- *Which type(s) of behaviour prove(s) to be most dominant among executives?*



To answer these questions, the research will establish acts of bureaucratic insubordination as an independent variable, exploring the causes for their emergence and the effects they have. The dependent variable for this research is the leader's behaviour, manifesting as a set of individually tailored strategies that change under influence of the independent variable. It will unravel how leaders' behaviours in public institutions change in response to insubordination and what concrete actions are taken. To narrow down the conceptualisation, this research will use various sources on insubordination, notably from works of O'Leary (2010; 2017) and Schuster et. al. (2021), developing a clear understanding of this phenomenon in the context of this research. Those studies, alongside others, focus on bureaucratic reasoning behind the acts of insubordination, ranging from acts of selfless servitude to personal and cultural agendas (O'Leary, 2010; Ritz, Brewer & Neumann, 2016).

#### **1.4 Scientific and Social Relevance**

Existing studies greatly focus on the sources of bureaucratic insubordination, often employing the public and bureaucrats' lenses as perspectives of their research. This research will focus on leadership strategies to address specific acts of defiance. There is a vast literature base that puts the leader as a unifying force or explores the phenomena of bureaucratic discretion (Ayres, 2018). While existing research, notably by Yukl, investigates characteristic behaviours of leaders, there is a knowledge gap on how those strategies are realistically implemented. This work attempts to fill a notable gap in the current literature on leadership strategies by addressing and building upon the existing research to extract those integrated, practical strategies under NPM. This research endeavours to directly investigate the approaches adopted by executives in public institutions when confronted with issues of bureaucratic insubordination. Majority of scientific literature on bureaucratic insubordination puts emphasis on the reasoning and motivation of bureaucrats, exploring why and how such acts take place. While scholars, notably O'Leary, explore the perspective of the executives, the aforementioned bureaucratic side is overwhelmingly dominating in studies on this topic. To add and support the existing theoretical claims, this work focuses solely on behavioural responses of executives to insubordination of known origin. Using studies on organisational management, particularly of Yukl (2012) and other authors, it implements those findings into a setting of the public arena, further developing the knowledge base on executive behaviours. The focus on leadership emphasises the importance of a central figure, upholding its significance in a more horizontal NPM setting. This aims to balance the scientific importance in the relationship between executives and subordinate bureaucrats, adding atop of the existing research and providing points of empirical evidence in terms of strategies and behaviours. While it is drawn upon theoretical frameworks from this arena, the findings intend to identify and develop concrete behavioural patterns, which are currently in use by leaders in public institutions. Instead of reproducing literature points on accountability in organisations, it aims to further them with up-to-date and unique insights from personal experiences, providing empirical data to fill the knowledge gaps in understanding these relationships (O'Leary

2010; Yukl, 2012; Heimann, Ingold & Kleinmann, 2020). Additionally, this research will contribute in furthering development of understanding of a leaders' behaviours. Yukl's (2012) research outlines the need for more descriptive research on established taxonomy, putting it in use in a real setting and showing behavioural overlaps, displaying how these behaviours are chosen and "*determine how interacting behaviours are used effectively by leaders in different situations*" (Yukl, 2012, p. 76). Additionally, the research aims to explain "*how effective leaders use specific behaviours that enhance multiple outcomes, minimise negative side effects, and balance difficult trade-offs*" (Yukl, 2012, p. 77). As aforementioned, both shortcomings will be compensated by applying established theoretical assumptions to a real life case, drawing meaningful conclusions and accommodating the less developed aspects of behavioural overlaps by providing concrete evidence and explanations.

Atop of the scientific significance, this research also carries great social relevance, illuminating the pivotal role of leadership within public organisations. Through a detailed examination of how political executives navigate challenges, the study offers valuable insights into the complexities of effective governance. These insights play a vital role in strengthening public institutions, ensuring their adaptability in the face of evolving socio-political landscapes. This work is relevant to various societal actors, including the executives, subordinate administrators and the public. It has the potential to aid the decision-making processes of leaders in the practical setting of public institutions. Making informed decisions is an important aspect of executive function, therefore having an outlined set of behaviours and strategies is a useful remedy for executives who face bureaucratic challenges. This allows them to appropriately adjust their behaviour and allocate resources, with outlined methods and behavioural patterns that correspond to the particular issue they face. The findings also benefit the bureaucratic group by uncovering reasonings and motivations behind executive decisions. That provides crucial information to the bureaucrats, who will be aware of the extent and impact their actions truly have, as well as prepare for potential executive response. Lastly, the research has the potential to cultivate increased trust and confidence in democratic processes, contributing to social and political cohesion. Public perception of an institution's competence depends on the ability of the executives to manage the challenges within. This research carries great relevance in this regard, as it unravels the underlying mechanisms behind responsibilities and functions of political executives, as well as the influence bureaucrats wield in shaping perceived politics. It fosters better social understanding of internal dynamics and decisions within Polish institutions. Additionally it contributes to research and knowledge on public management in Poland, which is known to a lesser degree in comparison to other countries.

## **1.5 Structure**

This work attempts to answer posed questions by first establishing a relevant and coherent theoretical framework. This chapter will focus on defining relevant concepts in a broader base of literature, consequently leading to their operationalisation in this research. Operationalising them will establish

these variables as measurable factors. The next chapter will focus on designing the methodology, where operationalised concepts will be employed into the design and outline the methods for data collection, addressing potential biases and validity of these methods. Further chapters will focus on the analysis and drawing conclusions, with the collected and coded data used to finalise the research by answering posed questions and drawing practical conclusions from the case study.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

The following chapter will establish the theoretical backbone for this work. It will progress by introducing the variables in the corresponding sub-sections, bringing forth relevant literature and frameworks, consequently focusing each variable to measurable theoretical concepts. First it will outline the relation between political leaders and bureaucrats, using the spatial delegation model and the factors of uncertainty and ally principle. It will then focus on the independent variable of bureaucratic insubordination to operationalise and develop a unified definition for this research. The dependent variable of executive response will also be operationalised into a measurable concept. The covariate variable will be mentioned, stating its significance to the examined relation.

### **2.1 Executive-Bureaucratic Relation & Discretion**

An executive in a public institution is an individual who attains their position through a formal democratic process, such as a public election or an internal organisational election. This leader holds a specific public office for a designated term, during which they are entrusted with the responsibility to represent the interests of the public, formulate policies, and oversee the execution of governmental functions (Cook, 1998). Elected leaders are accountable to relevant governing bodies and their authority is derived from the mandate provided by the constituents who participated in the election process. The role involves policy decision-making and the representation of the public's concerns within the framework of the institution they lead (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022). In contrast to public leaders, a bureaucrat is an appointed, non-elected professional who assumes an administrative role. Unlike elected leaders, bureaucrats are typically selected based on their expertise and experience rather than through an election process (Aberbach et. al., 1981). These individuals are responsible for the institution's day-to-day operations, managing procedures, and implementing policies. Bureaucrats are accountable to the elected leaders or higher-ranking officials within the institution, and their authority is derived from their position in the administrative hierarchy rather than a direct mandate from the public. They play a crucial role in policy execution, operational efficiency, and the effective functioning of the public institution, often exercising discretion within the parameters set by elected leaders and organisational policies (Carpenter & Krause, 2014).

The interaction between elected leaders and bureaucrats is a critical aspect of effective governance. Executives entrust bureaucrats with discretion to implement policies and manage day-to-day

operations. This delegation of authority is essential for operational efficiency, allowing bureaucrats to apply their expertise to decision-making processes. The principal-agent framework provides a lens for understanding this relationship where elected leaders act as principals who delegate tasks to bureaucrats (agents) to co-create policies (Torfing & Sørensen, 2019, Bækgaard, Blom-Hansen & Serritzlew, 2020). While this delegation enhances efficiency, it introduces a potential agency problem - the misalignment of interests between principals and agents (Lipsky, 2010). In the context of NPM, where efficiency and performance are paramount, the principal-agent framework gains relevance. This setting emphasises performance-based incentives and increased autonomy for bureaucrats. The challenge lies in striking a balance between granting discretion to bureaucrats for efficient operations and maintaining sufficient control to ensure alignment with the broader goals of the elected leaders and the institution (Bezes, Demazière, Bianic, Paradeise, Normand, Benamouzig, Pierru & Evetts, 2012). This delicate equilibrium is crucial for effective governance, where achieving organisational objectives requires a nuanced understanding of the principal-agent dynamics.

The relationship between a leader and subordinate is not a stable, universal model of principal-agent interactions (Bannink & Ossewaarde, 2011). Aberbach et. al. (1981) developed 4 distinct images of political-bureaucratic relations, outlining the dynamics between the leaders and subordinate administrators. This was adopted by Bækgaard (2020) and his co-authors who argued that those relations - revolving around the role division between those two parties - are an evolving and fluid scheme. They state that “*while political-bureaucratic relations may change over time (...) they take on general and consistent features at a given point in time*” (Bækgaard et al., 2020, p. 16) entailing that this relationship evolves from one image to another, but maintains a constant form for a time being. The transition is driven by the division of roles in the process of policymaking, from very strict separation to indistinguishable blending. The key factor in this transition is the amount of discretion granted to the bureaucrat by the politician. In their study on responsibility delegation, Huber and Shipan (2011) uses the delegation model originally developed by Epstein and O’Halloran, identifying policy uncertainty and ally principle as core variables behind the level of discretion granted to a bureaucrat. The principle is that on a spatial model, politicians and bureaucrats have different points of preferences regarding the policy at stake. The gap between these points affects their actions, resulting in divergence in the way the policy would be carried out and the level of granted discretion. In accordance with the ally principle stating that “*as the policy preferences of politicians and bureaucrats converge, politicians will delegate more discretion to bureaucrats*” (Huber and Shipan, 2011, p. 4) if their policy points are relatively close and neither side expects a utility loss, more discretion will be granted and the process will shift to a cooperative image. It shows how important this preference convergence is, for a strong cooperation between bureaucrats and their superiors where bureaucratic discretion and decentralisation is a dominant theme.

## 2.2 Independent Variable: Bureaucratic Insubordination

As stated by Svava (2001), the relationship between an elected executive and administrators has to be based on mutual help and assistance to effectively conduct governing affairs. The literature highlights diverse reasons for bureaucratic insubordination, acknowledging their interconnected and interchangeable nature. This differentiation is vital to account for varied responses to instances of insubordination. Further dissecting and partially separating these acts is crucial to comprehend responses that vary based on underlying motivations. This study anticipates variations in responses influenced by diverse experiences, personal strategies, and methods, aiming to connect various studies, furthering the knowledge base surrounding bureaucratic insubordination.

Schuster et al. (2021) describe a situation where a bureaucrat engages in activities that contradict the policy points or agenda of the elected official, consequently widening the gap between preferences and causing less discretion being granted. The term “guerilla bureaucracy” is mostly used in literature referring to an instance where crucial values are at stake, because of administrative actions of the leader. These acts of insubordination can be varied in nature and origin, perpetrated by “*dissatisfied public servants to address perceived wrongs and to influence their organisations*” (O’Leary, 2017, p. 72). In her work, O’Leary (2010) conducted a comprehensive evaluation of vantage points from which “guerilla bureaucracy” can be perceived (Figure 1). Whereas Schuster et. al. (2021) focused on this type of activities arising due to a high level of public service motivation (PSM) - a selfless act of public servants towards the benefit of the population (Ritz et al, 2016) - O’Leary (2010) expanded this view beyond simple incentive of service. In her work, she presented a set of points of motivations that act as a starting point for insubordination activities, each offering different types of understanding: Bureaucratic Politics, Ethics, Organisations and Management.

- The notion of *Bureaucratic Politics* refers to the vast organisational and bureaucratic cultures present in organisations and institutions. Bureaucrats and administrators, driven by motivations within their organisations, are often influenced by external forces, such as political agendas and the ideologies of superior stakeholders (Da Ros & Taylor, 2021). It may manifest as changes in institutional proceedings, such as changes in institutional modus operandi of individual modules or a reallocation of resources from one module to another. This can be a significant cause of acts of insubordination as bureaucrats may exercise their discretion to go against their superiors, striving to preserve internal institutional values and procedures (Keulemans & Groeneveld, 2019). The need for cooperation between different institutions poses a considerable challenge, as conflicting internal values may result in disagreements over courses of action. PSM plays a crucial role, as bureaucrats, motivated by their own ideologies and beliefs, navigate the intricate bureaucratic politics that influence the dynamics of their insubordination (Rutz et al., 2016). That means that their actions are influenced by their own perception of how their public servitude will manifest. They are

determined to preserve their way of conducting operations, rebelling against changes to the internal mechanisms.

- The notion of *Ethics* refers to individual values and convictions of a human being. In the context of bureaucratic insubordination, notions like religion, personal conviction, political stance, etc. can influence if an administrator will engage in acts that go against their superiors. The so-called “ethical obligations”, presented by Waldo in the work of O’Leary (2010) is said to be an indefinite list of personalised factors that drive and affect individual’s behaviour in the context of guerilla bureaucracy. In this instance, the PSM is also a subject to ethics, as due to personal ethical beliefs a public servant may act against perceived utility, for example by refusing to carry out their function in a scenario that contradicts their conviction. In their view, they are serving the public by defending values they deem crucial and “correct” (Frederickson & Frederickson, 1995).
- The notion of *Organisations and Management* aids the understanding of bureaucratic insubordination through the causal mechanism of permeable organisational boundaries. This concept acknowledges that the organisational culture or mission of public institutions is subject to constant change caused by the external environment (Da Ros & Taylor, 2021). In reality, the ideal image of an independent institution is often influenced by external factors leading to undesired institutional changes. They may include management adjustments or the total politicisation of an institution, as seen in police forces or individual administrative positions (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994). PSM is a critical aspect as bureaucrats, grounded in their own sense of serving the public, grapple with the evolving nature of institutions (Rutz et al., 2016). Their commitment to public service, influenced by personal ideologies and beliefs, contributes to the complexities of bureaucratic insubordination.

While being part of the same phenomenon of bureaucratic insubordination, there are some key differences that need to be highlighted for each vantage point. Bureaucratic Politics is characterised by internal organisational dynamics influenced by factors like political agendas, driving bureaucrats to act against superiors. Ethics emphasises individual values and convictions, such as ethical obligations, as driving forces behind bureaucratic insubordination. Finally, Organisations and Management, highlights the permeability of organisational boundaries and external changes, focusing on influencing overall organisational culture and functioning. As can be seen, PSM - being a highly personalised factor - is also influenced by those reasons, resulting in the notion of “public service” manifesting differently than just simple utility maximisation for society (Clerkin & Cogburn, 2012; Ritz et al, 2016). With various motivations behind acts of insubordination, the taken approach can be developed in accordance with these motivations, resulting in more effective and tailored strategies.

This framework is a great tool for this investigation by allowing each instance of insubordination to be assigned to one or a limited number of points. O’Leary’s (2010) vantage points, reasoning of Schuster et. al. (2021) on insubordination caused by PSM or findings of Keulemans & Groeneveld (2019) on

bureaucrats acting in defence of values, are not mutually exclusive - they can occur simultaneously and transcend at some points, offering an extremely intricate framework of reasonings behind acts of bureaucratic insubordination and can be assigned as different manifestations of the same variable.

While this model cannot be fully dissected into sub-variables due to their complementary nature, O'Leary's (2010) division provides a standpoint for linking other studies on insubordination and bridging understanding gaps among different actors. Despite being a simplified representation, this model serves as a suitable mechanism for operationalizing the variable by distinguishing different sources of insubordination, providing a structured tool for measurement and categorization, maintaining flexibility and mutual inclusiveness.

*Figure 1*  
*Vantage Points for Causes of Bureaucratic Insubordination*



O'Leary, R. (2010). Guerrilla employees: Should managers nurture, tolerate, or terminate them?

Division is important to understand how executives employ different leadership behaviours as a response, as well as to identify what type of behaviour is most prevalent or appropriate for each dimension. By presenting the executive with a clear picture of why insubordination occurs and what is the reasoning behind it, the investigation will make informative conclusions about the behaviour, acknowledging potential differences and showing similarities between behavioural models. Therefore, separation of dimensions allows for a simplified picture of this phenomenon that can be presented and responded to in different ways despite manifesting in the same manner. It introduces much needed clarity and transparency by presenting distinct and clear scenarios. In doing so, it provides executives with a comprehensive understanding of situations they may encounter and enables informed responses regarding their behaviour. Such simplification does not divide bureaucratic insubordination into

separate acts, but stimulates the variety of employed behaviours by presenting different, underlying motivations.

### **2.3 Dependent Variable: Leaders' Behaviour**

Despite progressing decentralisation of power and authority, the role of leadership figures still remains crucial within the functioning and studying of public institutions (Guerre & Bissessar, 2009). Their task, as executives, is to provide direction and implement an agenda. They are responsible for formulating and (partially) implementing policy points that align with the interests and needs of the public they serve and political actors they respond to, while representing the institution itself (Pless, Sengupta, Wheeler & Maak, 2021). Such figures play a pivotal role in shaping the vision, direction, and functioning of a public institution. In face of bureaucratic insubordination hampering the policy agenda, they have to react in an appropriate manner, operating within their legal and professional boundaries. Executives are often subject to constraints, such as legal norms that shape their behaviour and responses, potentially affecting the dependent variables (Cooper, 2020).

There is a substantial theoretical basis to identify and categorise leadership behaviours in managing their organisational environment. Various studies explore their implications, reasoning and plausible management strategies (Savage, Nix, Whitehead & Blair, 1991). Organisational management is a crucial aspect in public and private organisations alike, resulting in a significant need for a stakeholder in a managerial position. The essence of leadership lies in the capacity to utilise these behaviours to achieve objectives and facilitate change, often defined as “*a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal*” (Bolden, 2004, p. 5). Through their actions, leaders significantly impact the processes that determine performance, ultimately enhancing the overall effectiveness (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). Therefore leadership is a required component in addressing bureaucratic insubordination, since these actions go beyond outlined responsibilities and duties. Without it, there is no mechanism to respond to divergence from norms and responsibilities, which results in organisation's failure to reach outlined goals.

Previous research on leadership has sought to identify specific behavioural traits utilised to address difficulties. These behaviours encompass a range of approaches, with some taxonomies emphasising broader, more inclusive categories, while others focus on narrower, more finely defined classifications (Yukl, 2012; Yukl, Gordon & Taber, 2002). To answer the posed questions this work makes an assumption that from the perspective of the leader, a significant divergence from their point of preference (policy vision) puts its implication in question, consequently requiring their involvement to address it. It will use the “Hierarchical Taxonomy of Leadership Behaviours” (Figure 2) created by Yukl (2012). He analysed tendencies of leadership behaviours, organising them to separate characteristics and models of actions, taken by leaders. Not all of the characteristics are corresponding to actions taken as a response to organisational turmoil - they describe general management styles of each category and corresponding leadership traits. These sets of behaviours will be used to identify



the employed strategies used by political leaders and assist in understanding their implications. Unique characteristics of each meta-category will aid extraction of strategies to navigate difficulties of insubordination, serving as a tool for clarification. In the context of this research, the dependent variable will be understood as a tailored, strategic response that embodies one of management styles in addressing an issue that concerns a leader's policy agenda.

*Figure 2*  
*Taxonomy of Behaviours*

**Hierarchical Taxonomy of Leadership Behaviors**

Task-oriented	Clarifying
	Planning
	Monitoring operations
	Problem solving
Relations-oriented	Supporting
	Developing
	Recognizing
	Empowering
Change-oriented	Advocating change
	Envisioning change
	Encouraging innovation
	Facilitating collective learning
External	Networking
	External monitoring
	Representing

Yukl, G. (2012). *Effective leadership behavior: What we know and what questions need more attention*

This typology shows behaviours the leader can display in managing the team efforts. Each meta-category offers a different approach to managing leadership responsibilities of addressing issues caused by inefficiency, effectiveness, insubordination, etc. The following meta-categories will be used to develop potential responses that political executives employ to address and remedy acts of bureaucratic insubordination. The subordinate characteristics/actions of each category will be used to develop the coding scheme in the next chapter. The meta-categories will be introduced with corresponding hypotheses about leaders' behaviour and responses. The differences between those types are spelled out to identify and account for potential behavioural overlaps.

**2.3.1 Task-oriented Leadership**

The main objective of task-oriented behaviour is for the leader to guarantee the efficient utilisation of people, equipment, and other resources in accomplishing the designated mission of a group or organisation. Essential component behaviours encompass planning and organising activities, clarifying roles and objectives, and monitoring operations. The primary focus is on managing tasks and resources to address challenges within the organisation in an effective manner (Yukl, 2012).

Planning is a crucial aspect of this behaviour, highlighting the role and position of a leader in collective efforts within organisations. It encompasses decision-making regarding goals, organising an agenda, assigning responsibilities and distributing resources. Effective and efficient planning involves arranging activities and assigning tasks in a manner that achieves task objectives while avoiding delays, redundant efforts, and resource wastage (Kim & Yukl, 1995; Yukl, 2012)

It entails identifying and developing crucial action steps, consequently determining a suitable approach and specifying responsible individuals with designated resources. The planning process often relies on information provided by individuals who possess specified knowledge or qualities for designated projects (Pless et. al., 2021). Research indicates that effective planning can enhance a leader's overall effectiveness, highlighting the importance of centralised authority that transfers appropriate amounts of discretion and resources to subordinate executives to achieve desired outcome, that is predetermined by their executive vision (Kim & Yukl, 1995).

In order for a vision to be accurately facilitated, leaders must assure that objectives are clarified, ensuring that individuals comprehend given short-term tasks and follow predetermined steps. It encompasses elucidating work responsibilities, conveying objectives and communicating any pertinent rules and procedures. The establishment of clear and realistic goals is generally associated with enhanced group performance (Locke & Latham, 1991). Failure in doing so can result in misconception by subordinates regarding goals or methods, also generating perceived discretion that in truth has not been granted.

Even in case of clear expectations, task-oriented leaders exert a degree of supervision and control over the process. They monitor the execution of assigned tasks, ensuring that the work aligns with the established plan. Information obtained through monitoring serves to identify challenges and opportunities, allowing leaders to assess the necessity for adjustment. In case there is an issue that needs to be addressed, task-oriented leaders will engage to solve it (Yukl, 2012). This approach involves identifying the cause of the problem and providing clear, confident direction. Effective problem-solving distinguishes between operational issues that can be quickly resolved and complex problems necessitating change-oriented behaviours and the involvement of other leaders. Negative forms of problem-solving include neglecting issues, responding without properly approaching the problem, discouraging input from other actors, and reacting in ways that exacerbate problems (Almeida, Hartog, De Hoogh, Franco & Porto, 2021).

Concluding from the qualities above a task-oriented leader will approach issues in a manner that prioritises the mission and goal of the institution. In the context of insubordination, the leader's

proactive monitoring and effective problem-solving distinguish this approach as a strategic response to bureaucratic challenges (Locke & Latham, 1991; Almeida et al., 2021). They focus on facilitating concrete results and direct involvement in case of issues, to set the proceedings back on a predetermined track, with discretion and bureaucratic autonomy not being a highly regarded factor. Core behaviours like planning and organising facilitate effective and centralised decision-making, minimising delays and resource wastage (Kim & Yukl, 1995; Yukl, 2012). Task-oriented leaders play a crucial role in clarifying expectations and work responsibilities, fostering enhanced group performance (Locke & Latham, 1991). Involvement of executive actors and a focus on achieving concrete results demonstrate a commitment to the organisational vision, addressing insubordination issues with a goal-driven approach (Yukl, 2012). A task-oriented executive takes a proactive stance by prioritising clear, top-down communication, meticulous planning, and ongoing progress monitoring. This approach aims to limit subordinates' discretion, showcasing the leader's direct involvement in organisational processes. In instances where outlined objectives are not being realised due to diverse motivations or a lack of commitment from bureaucrats, the executive intervenes directly. This intervention becomes imperative when prescribed steps are not followed, resulting in project delays. The expected outcome of this behaviour is that the leader recognizes acts of insubordination that hinder progress, despite clearly delineated objectives and action plans. Consequently, the leader responds by revoking discretionary powers from bureaucrats, personally overseeing project implementation to ensure adherence to established plans and timely progress. Overall, task-oriented leadership provides an effective response to bureaucratic insubordination, aligning with the need for clear communication, strategic planning, and goal-oriented problem-solving facilitated by a central executive figure in the face of organisational challenges.

Therefore a plausible hypothesis is the following:

*Hypothesis 1: In face of bureaucratic insubordination, a political executive will react by displaying characteristics of task-oriented behaviour.*

### **2.3.2 Relations-oriented Leadership**

Relations-oriented leaders seek to improve member skills, foster positive leader–member relationships and deepen commitment to the mission. They focus on building strong interpersonal connections and creating a supportive environment. Positive relations-oriented behaviours contribute to skill development and instil a shared commitment to a mission (Yukl, 2012).

Support is one of the crucial aspects of relations-oriented leadership behaviour. Through that, leaders cultivate cooperative relationships, demonstrating concern for the needs and emotions of members and offering encouragement in task facilitation. Support fosters cooperation and mediates conflicts. Studies have highlighted a significant positive relationship between supporting leadership and

effectiveness, whereas hostile behaviours were shown to produce opposite results, for example in the form of retaliation by subordinates (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Yukl, 2012).

Investing in member development is another prominent aspect of relation-oriented behaviour. Leaders deploy developing strategies to enhance members' skills and professional growth. This involves pertinent training opportunities, creating assignments that encourage experiential learning, and developmental activities. Additional methods include delegating instructional responsibilities and organising practice sessions to harness acquired skills. This behaviour values member development and commitment, investing resources to increase their capabilities (Kim & Yukl, 1995; Yukl, 2012). This is done with a goal to create a group of skilled members who can be entrusted with a high degree of discretion, delivering a product of high quality and in accordance with the executive's expectations (Ayres, 2018). In presence of skilled members who deliver services of expected quality, leaders recognize their achievements and praise their performance, to maintain such status. It can manifest through tangible rewards or bonuses, outlining for members that their contribution is being recorded and better performance can result in their utility increasing.

Leaders can empower subordinates whose general performance and commitment is exemplary by granting them more discretion in work-related decisions (Huber and Shipan, 2011). They consider subordinate's inputs in decision making or even delegating them to more responsible tasks, assigning the authority to make decisions, previously made by the leader. The term "participative leadership" is often used to characterise extensive use of empowering decision procedures. Bringing subordinates closer to the decision-making process results in their specified knowledge proving to be a valuable input, contributing to the effectiveness and efficiency of the action they participate in (Yukl, 2012; Wang, Hou & Li, 2022).

When faced with bureaucratic insubordination, leaders with a relations-oriented approach may respond by granting discretion, strategically aligned with fostering collaboration and addressing underlying issues (Huber & Shipan, 2011). This decision reflects the leader's commitment to establishing a horizontal relationship that encourages open dialogue and values subordinates' expertise over authoritative dominance (Yukl, 2012; Wang, Hou & Li, 2022). The leader's emphasis on collaboration and shared responsibility demonstrates a dedication to resolving differences constructively. By involving subordinates in decision-making, the leader aims to find common ground and enhance overall organisational performance (Yukl, 2012). From these qualities, it can be inferred that a relations-oriented leader approaches issues by prioritising collaboration and delegating necessary authority. This is achieved through investing in subordinates' development and facilitating horizontal communication, where both political executives and bureaucrats contribute to policy creation. Bureaucratic discretion is partially granted, recognizing appropriate and high performance. This approach uses insubordination as a catalyst for dialogue, focusing on achieving results through collaboration with discretion delegation and investing in members being dominant features.

Therefore a plausible hypothesis is the following:

*Hypothesis 2: In face of bureaucratic insubordination, a political executive will react by displaying characteristics of relations-oriented behaviour.*

### **2.3.3 Change-oriented Leadership**

Change-oriented leadership focuses on fostering innovation, adaptability and promoting flexibility in face of external changes. It encompasses advocating change, articulating an inspiring vision and policy goal, encouraging innovation, and promoting collective learning. This behaviour can be broken into two segments, first underscoring a leader's role in initiating necessary changes, while the latter focusing on a leader's engagement in facilitating these changes.

In the face of gradual environmental changes, leaders play a crucial role in highlighting emerging threats or opportunities. Institutional isomorphism, as suggested by Seyfried, Ansmann, and Pohlenz (2019), can enhance performance by emulating other organisations. Organisational adaptability failures (Struckell, Ojha, Patel, & Dhir, 2022) stem from neglect and decision stagnation. Leadership traits like adaptability require awareness and courage to avoid ineffective solutions (Yukl, 2012). Leaders, proposing or involving experts in crafting strategies, enhance commitment and employ superior strategies (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Fostering commitment to new strategies relies on a captivating vision resonating with subordinates' values and needs, especially for executives elected for their vision and agenda (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022). Stylistic devices and symbols enhance the vision's impact, but confidence in feasibility is crucial for acceptance, cautioning against miscalculated risks and false assumptions (Yukl, 2012; Gill & Angosto-Ferrández, 2018).

Leaders can actively contribute to organisational changes by engaging in "intellectual stimulation" or promoting "innovative thinking," encouraging creative thinking and experimentation (Burchell, 2009). Creating a climate of psychological safety and trust is crucial for eliciting novel ideas from team members. Leaders, as advocates for innovative proposals, shape organisational culture and support collective learning (Yukl, 2012; McKinsey & Company, 2021). Their role in enhancing existing strategies and supporting internal efforts and external research fosters a safe learning environment for strategy and project development. To optimise collective learning, leaders guide teams in analysing failures, avoiding over-generalizations (Tran, 1998; Yukl, 2012), contributing to cohesive models for improving decision-making and achieving policy goals.

When facing bureaucratic insubordination, change-oriented leaders strategically emphasise adaptability and innovation to effectively address the challenge. Recognizing the need for organisational flexibility, these leaders advocate and implement strategic changes to overcome resistance (Yukl, 2012; McKinsey & Company, 2021). Their unconventional methods go beyond adjusting discretion, focusing on broader organisational adaptability (McKinsey & Company, 2021). In navigating gradual environmental changes, change-oriented leaders play a pivotal role, reshaping organisational performance through adaptive solutions, relevant expertise, and a compelling vision

(Yukl & Mahsud, 2010; Backhaus & Vogel, 2022). This leadership actively guides change, emphasising intellectual stimulation while maintaining bureaucrats' discretion. Change-oriented leaders foster adaptability, using both leader autonomy and bureaucratic discretion to reshape methodologies and culture. They embody key characteristics like advocating change, envisioning change, encouraging innovation, and facilitating collective learning (Yukl, 2012). Successful leaders balance autonomy and discretion, aligning organisational culture with public service objectives. This nuanced approach to intellectual stimulation prioritises clear communication and a shared vision to overcome bureaucratic challenges effectively.

Therefore a plausible hypothesis is the following:

*Hypothesis 3: In face of bureaucratic insubordination, a political executive will react by displaying characteristics of change-oriented behaviour.*

#### **2.3.4 External Leadership**

Lastly, leaders can enhance performance by engaging in actions that offer pertinent information about the external environment, securing essential resources and support, and advancing the reputation and interests of their work unit.

Effective leadership involves cultivating positive relationships within organisations to ensure access to valuable resources (Çakır & Adıgüzel, 2020). It encompasses group activities and relationship-building tactics. Leaders enhance their networks and promote networking among subordinates for broader organisational connections, facilitating knowledge transfer and collaborative efforts (Yukl, 2012). Besides monitoring the work environment, leaders also monitor the external environment, examining information to identify threats and opportunities. External monitoring relies on a leader's network of external resources, crucial for accurately perceiving the organisation's dynamic external environment (Yukl, 2012; Schuster et al., 2021). Leaders, as representatives, advocate for resources, safeguard the organisation's reputation, and coordinate activities (Somech & Naamneh, 2017). Success is linked to their influence in obtaining crucial resources and support (Yukl, 2012). In cases of high internal interdependence, leaders coordinate activities and shield members from external interference (Yukl, 2012).

Leaders' focus on network cultivation, both within and outside the organisation, allows them to secure essential external resources and support (Çakır & Adıgüzel, 2020; Yukl, 2012). Confronted with bureaucratic insubordination, externally focused executives proactively leverage resources beyond their institutional environment. Maintaining an external network equips them to address internal challenges with external expertise and solutions. Engaging with external stakeholders via these networks becomes a key strategy, involving activities like workshops. Executives play a crucial role in convincing bureaucratic personnel to follow the undertaken direction. This approach may involve utilising external resources, yielding superior results compared to direct executive intervention.

According to Vermeeren and co-authors (2014) in public institutions, external-oriented leaders delegate addressing insubordination to other executives or higher-ranking bureaucrats. Such executives actively engage in discussions and lobbying activities with external actors to address issues stemming from proposed changes causing insubordination.

Therefore a plausible hypothesis is the following:

*Hypothesis 4: In face of bureaucratic insubordination, a political executive will react by displaying characteristics of external-oriented behaviour.*

The hypotheses will be tested by identifying the behaviours a political executive embodies by analysing their pattern of response. This allows to create vignettes of scenarios, supported by the framework of O'Leary (2010) to which executives will develop their tailored responses, that can be identified in outlined sets of behaviours, linking the independent variable to Yukl's (2012) typology.

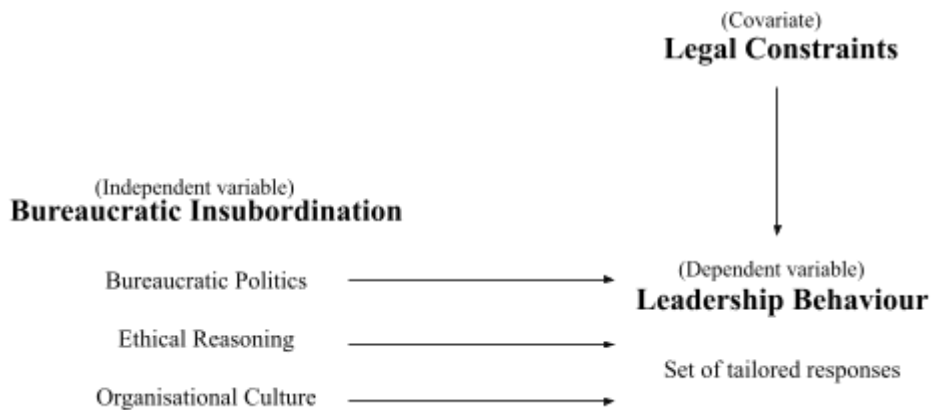
#### **2.4 Legal Constraints**

This study focuses on executives' behaviour in public institutions facing bureaucratic insubordination. However, their behaviour is moderated by other variables, such as legal limitations, enriching contextual understanding (Tippins, 2023). While not the primary focus, legal constraints play an integral role in shaping the environment for executive responses. Recognizing this aims to capture potential factors influencing the relationship and responses. Neglecting legal considerations may lead to incomplete or misleading conclusions (Skelly, Dettori & Brodt, 2012). Legal norms serve as binding frameworks, imposing constraints on public institutions for accountability and transparency (Da Ros & Taylor, 2021). Adherence to external constraints is pivotal for upholding governance probity and navigating checks and balances (Gratton & Morelli, 2021), limiting executive power within public institutions. Codes and regulations predetermine certain aspects of their behaviour, influencing their response paths (Oliver, 1991; Da Ros & Taylor, 2021).

#### **2.5 Variable Diagram**

The effect of the independent variable of bureaucratic insubordination on the dependent variable of executive behaviour will be analysed by assessing how public executives behave when faced with such acts that arise due to different motivations. In doing so, this analysis will also acknowledge factors which have a potential effect on this relationship. The next chapter will introduce the methods of data collection and evaluation, discuss the coding and control mechanisms, as well as briefly foreshadow potential limitations.

Figure 3  
Directed Acyclic Graph of Variables



### 3. Methodological Framework

This chapter outlines the methods used for the operationalisation of established variables, data collection and the method of analysis. Firstly establishing the research design and describing the empirical setting of the investigation. It then outlines the methods of data collection from the target population. Once the methods are stated it operationalises mentioned variables. The analysis strategy provides a framework of how coding furthers the analysis to arrive at the stage of hypothesis testing. The chapter culminates with reflection of the validity of these methods, outlining possible shortcomings and reasons for concern.

#### 3.1 Research Design

The main research question for this work is “*How do executives in public institutions behave when responding to acts of bureaucratic insubordination?*”. Aiming to unravel concrete strategies and action models, basing them on the characteristic leadership behaviours from the taxonomy of Yukl (2012), as a response to the phenomenon of bureaucratic insubordination based upon the framework by O’Leary (2010). This research design was of qualitative nature, conducting measurements through interviews among the target population of bureaucratic executives. It established the prevalent characteristics of their behaviour and methods, drawing intermediate conclusions (and establishing assumptions) based on the mentioned taxonomy and supportive research. During the interviews, the scenarios of bureaucratic insubordination acts were outlined (from now on referred to as “vignettes” (Alexander & Becker, 1978)) and presented to the interviewee to obtain their response. The use of vignettes aimed to enhance the clarity of participants’ judgments by presenting carefully crafted scenarios, based on O’Leary’s (2012) framework. They served as a tool to explore actions within specific contextual scenarios, providing a nuanced understanding of responses and behaviours. Lastly,



vignettes offered a less political and less threatening avenue for participants to express their thoughts on sensitive topics, contributing to a more comprehensive analysis of internal dynamics. Vignettes consisting of only general practical assumptions and characteristics of the scenario enabled the interviewee to apply their personal experiences, reflect upon them, and speculate (Barter & Renold, 2000). Their approach, reasoning, methods, and possible anecdotes were recorded and coded in accordance with established characteristics of the leader's behaviour from each meta-category. While maintaining those qualities, using vignettes allowed the participants to define the situation in their own terms and perspectives. Because of these characteristics and a flexible design, which maintained crucial structural and theoretical assumptions, vignettes were a better-suited approach, compared to more rigid forms of qualitative research. However, it came at a cost of not being fully able to capture the full reality of the situation, which could influence the realistic image of the collected data (Erfanian, Roudsari, Heydari & Bahmani, 2020). This was a necessary shortcoming that resulted from the need to ground the vignettes in the established theoretical setting.

The empirical setting of this research was the sub-national sector of public institutions in Poland, offering populations with different experiences and positions, using it as a case study relevant to a broader research context. In Poland's administrative structure since 1999, territories are divided into municipalities, counties, and voivodeships, forming three tiers of local self-government (Central Statistical Office of Poland, 2022). Voivodeships, acting as administrative hubs, are crucial in shaping regional development and policies, addressing aspects like economic growth, infrastructure, education, environmental sustainability, and cultural activities. Voivodeship authorities also oversee regional-level tasks such as public education, health promotion, cultural preservation, and rural development. At the county level, administrative bodies manage supra-municipal responsibilities, including schools, libraries, roads, social assistance, and unemployment reduction. Municipalities, at the grassroots level, handle local matters like transportation, water supply, education, and environmental protection, focusing on residents' specific needs (Central Statistical Office of Poland, 2022). However policies and administrative decisions are largely dependent and responsive to the trends and decisions present on the central, national scale. This poses certain constraints and restricts the space in which institutions and administrative actors can manoeuvre in their operations, introducing power struggles and policy disagreements within the institutions, affecting internal relations and dynamics (Shaker, 2012; Biernat, 2014). Taking a multi-leveled approach to respondents assured the variety of data, providing various views and experiences used to extract relevant data points. Considering a possible sensitive political context of the investigation, participant anonymity was maintained to mitigate potential biases, thereby enhancing the reliability of recorded responses (Lancaster, 2016).

### **3.2 Research Methods**

This research focused on individuals from different administrative branches to gain multiple perspectives and validate the research (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe & Neville, 2014). It adopted the method of "elite interviews" to attain a comprehensive understanding of leadership characteristics among executives from different institutions. This contributed to the validity of the data by focusing on participants who came from "elite" settings, such as a "*powerful position that had afforded the individual unique knowledge or information from a privileged perspective*" (Natow, 2019, p. 1). This allowed to test the formulated hypotheses by analysing instances of each behaviour through appropriately coded evidence for its presence and effect. With identified behavioural trait(s), the hypotheses were tested by asking open-ended questions that provided contextual answers with examples, in which the particular behaviour was or was not present. This allowed the characteristics present in the taxonomy of Yukl (2012) to be identified, attributing them to each meta-category of behaviour.

Conducting the research among an "elite" group of respondents reflected the orientation of the research - attempting to explore the strategies and behaviours of executives, contributing to their knowledge and expertise. It was composed of executives from different levels of governance (municipal, local, regional, etc.). Respondents were required to occupy an executive/managerial position within a public administrative organ. The setting allowed for a large population of potential candidates who were contacted via official office channels, such as mailboxes and their respective offices, as well as requesting recommendations and direct contact with the participants themselves, resulting in a snowball effect of developing a potential respondents base. The latter proved to be a successful way of gathering participants, as their busy agenda often hindered their responses to official communication. Responding to requests of their peers and colleagues assured direct contact with the target population, which was less likely to be disregarded. Recommendations, ensured that participants qualified to provide insights relevant to the investigation, and held a position similar to the referrer. Following a chain of relations across institutions assured that the interviewees came from the target population, simultaneously providing experiences from various administrative organs in the region of focus.

### **3.3 Operationalisation**

In this study, operationalizing the dependent variable involved using the characteristics from each meta-category as indicator points, attributing described strategies and acts to each set. That allowed for identifying acts that corresponded to a singular behaviour and unveiled potential overlaps between them, contributing to the validity and coherency of the research. The overlaps were accounted for by the method of coding by highlighting the recorded responses that were deemed relevant. Highlights, coded with different colour schemes, clearly separated individual behaviours, but also allowed for marking behavioural overlaps. The coding scheme is presented in Table 2 in the next subsection. The

interviews delved into how leaders would respond to hypothetical scenarios of bureaucratic insubordination, using the methods of nudging or directly asking for possible examples to obtain relevant data.

The independent variable of bureaucratic insubordination was operationalized by creating vignettes of polarised acts of insubordination in terms of their origin - motivated by Bureaucratic Politics, Ethics, Organizations, and Management - from the overlapping areas on O'Leary's (2010) model. While it was established that such a division is not reflective of the true occurrence of insubordination among bureaucrats, such a simplified approach allowed for operationalization and measurement of the significance and impact of those types. This was introduced through the vignettes in the forms of hypothetical, broad scenarios that the interviewee was asked to relate and respond to.

The vignettes are presented in the table below, with accompanying questions presented in Appendix 1:

Table 1

*Vignettes of motivations behind bureaucratic insubordination*

<b>Motivation behind bureaucratic insubordination</b>	<b>Vignette</b>
<i>Bureaucratic Politics</i>	<p><b>Context:</b> You are implementing a new policy initiative aimed at improving public services. The policy involves a significant reallocation of internal resources and restructuring of departments within your jurisdiction.</p> <p><b>Situation:</b> As you roll out the new policy, you encounter unexpected resistance from a group of mid-level bureaucrats. They are concerned about potential changes to their individual roles, reporting structures, and power dynamics. These bureaucrats have strong ties to other influential departments and are using their internal networks to lobby against the proposed changes.</p> <p><b>Manifestation:</b> Despite clear directives from your office, these bureaucrats subtly slow down the implementation process, leverage their connections to garner support for their cause within the organisation, and strategically use internal politics to resist the changes.</p>
<i>Ethics</i>	<p><b>Context:</b> As an executive, you are pushing for a policy initiative that aligns with your campaign promises. The initiative, however, faces resistance from within your team, particularly from bureaucrats who express strong ethical objections to certain aspects of the proposed policy. They believe the policy contradicts their personal values and principles.</p> <p><b>Situation:</b> Despite your strong push for the initiative, these bureaucrats refuse to fully implement aspects of the policy they find ethically challenging. They argue that their role as public servants necessitates adherence to a higher ethical standard, even if it means resisting certain political directives.</p> <p><b>Manifestation:</b> The bureaucrats, out of ethical concerns, are selectively implementing the policy, omitting elements they find objectionable. They also voice their dissent in internal meetings, emphasising the ethical challenges they perceive in the proposed policy.</p>
<i>Organisation Management</i> &	<p><b>Context:</b> In the institution you lead as a political executive, there's a directive from higher authorities to implement a new management framework. This change is perceived as essential for the institution to align with broader organisational goals and practices.</p> <p><b>Situation:</b> As you initiate the implementation, you encounter resistance from a faction within your bureaucratic staff. This resistance stems not only from the natural discomfort with change but is deeply rooted in the existing organisational culture that your team is determined to uphold. They express concerns that the proposed changes might jeopardise the efficiency of proceedings and erode the established way of functioning that they believe contributes to the institution's success.</p> <p><b>Manifestation:</b> The manifestation of this resistance is evident in their reluctance to embrace the new management framework, and some staff members might even actively refuse or delay the implementation process. This poses a significant challenge as you strive to strike a balance between adhering to higher authorities' directives for a large organisational change and respecting the values embedded in the current organisational culture.</p>

This approach aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of leadership behaviours in the specific context of addressing insubordination. The main question of the vignettes asked for a general response and approach to this issue - how do leaders behave in the face of such issues. Each vignette was accompanied by a set of questions that aimed to unravel the behaviour of executives, attempting to extract crucial information regarding their reactions, considered approaches, and taken steps. In the end, the questions aimed to extract concrete responses and models of reactions. With the progression of the interviews, those questions left space for adjustments, accommodating the potential need for

further development or elimination of certain aspects, ensuring a nuanced exploration of leadership behaviours and their implications in the face of bureaucratic challenges.

### **3.4 Analysis Strategy**

The obtained data is composed of intertwined fictional scenarios, anecdotes and experiences. To properly test the hypotheses, this data was properly arranged, translated and coded prior to evaluation. Due to the empirical setting, interviews were conducted in Polish, with translation coming before the coding took place. Using translation softwares and knowledge of the language, the data was appropriately translated and formatted for the analysis. This was done through “coding” employed as a systematic method to categorise and organise qualitative data, specifically the interview responses. Keywords or phrases associated with distinct leadership behaviours were highlighted, allowing for the systematic identification and categorization of responses based on these leadership styles. This approach ensured a structured analysis, facilitating the drawing of individual conclusions for each leadership behaviour and providing a reliable means to test the research hypotheses. To ensure anonymity of the interviewees and interview differentiation, each transcript is coded with initials, instead of names or positions. Prior to the interviews, a coding scheme was developed to accommodate for theoretical points of Yukl’s (2012) taxonomy. Attributing different highlights and marking to different characteristics of each meta-category, allows to clearly differentiate between the recorded behaviours and account for overlaps, as presented on the coding scheme below:

Table 2  
Coding Scheme of Leadership Behaviours

Leadership Behaviour	Associated Traits and Characteristics	Coding method
<b>Task-oriented</b>	<p><b>Planning:</b> Develops short-term plans, outlining steps and attributing resources</p> <p><b>Clarifying:</b> Clearly explains tasks, sets specific goals and deadlines, communicates priorities, rules, and standard procedures</p> <p><b>Monitoring:</b> Checks progress and work quality, evaluates task performance systematically, and examines relevant information sources</p> <p><b>Problem Solving:</b> Identifies work-related problems, conducts diagnosis, and takes decisive actions for effective resolution</p>	<p>Mark <b>RED</b></p> <p>Overlap: Highlight <b>RED</b></p>
<b>Relations-oriented</b>	<p><b>Supporting:</b> Shows concern for members' needs and feelings, provides support and expresses confidence in successful task completion</p> <p><b>Recognizing:</b> Acknowledges achievements and recommends appropriate rewards for high performance</p> <p><b>Developing:</b> Provides feedback, offers career advice, and encourages skill development</p> <p><b>Empowering:</b> Involves members in decision-making and delegates responsibility and authority for important tasks</p>	<p>Mark <b>GREEN</b></p> <p>Overlap: Highlight <b>GREEN</b></p>
<b>Change-oriented</b>	<p><b>Advocating Change:</b> Explains threats or opportunities, proposes desirable changes, pushes for essential but difficult changes</p> <p><b>Envisioning Change:</b> Communicates a clear vision and describes proposed changes with enthusiasm and optimism</p> <p><b>Encouraging Innovation:</b> Emphasises the importance of innovation, encourages creative thinking and new approaches, and supports efforts for innovative products, services, or processes</p> <p><b>Facilitating Collective Learning:</b> Utilises systematic procedures to improve performance and encourages knowledge sharing</p>	<p>Mark <b>BLUE</b></p> <p>Overlap: Highlight <b>BLUE</b></p>
<b>External</b>	<p><b>Networking:</b> Attends meetings and uses social networks to build favourable relationships for obtaining resources</p> <p><b>External Monitoring:</b> Analyses external environment, and changes to identify threats, opportunities and implications</p> <p><b>Representing:</b> Lobbies for essential resources, promotes and defends the work unit's reputation, and negotiates agreements with other parts of the organisation</p>	<p>Mark <b>PURPLE</b></p> <p>Overlap: Highlight <b>PURPLE</b></p>
<b>Covariate</b>	<p><b>Legal constraints</b> - behaviour moderated by existing norms and regulations</p>	<p>Highlight <b>ORANGE</b></p>

Once the data was obtained, the code was refined to accommodate unaccounted aspects, such as the mentioned covariate. The use of coding enhances the rigour and replicability of the qualitative analysis, offering a systematic and consistent approach to interpret and compare responses across various leadership styles.

This coding scheme provided 5 individual markings of evidence within collected data, accounting for both overlaps and established covariate. The theoretical framework of Yukl (2012) was used for the first 4 codes, marking characteristics of each meta-category. Later, the last code was added to accommodate for the covariate, which was discovered to strongly affect the behaviour and overlapping with previously coded behaviours. From the collected data, 4 individual strains of behaviours were coded identifying and controlling for potential overlaps between the behaviours, while the last code accounted for the impact of the covariate and considered the contextual circumstances of the response.

### **3.5 Reflection on Methodology**

This methodology has notable strengths that contribute to the overall validity and reliability of the research. However, there are notable shortcomings that the research recognizes and attempts to remedy.

The strength resides with the method of data collection via vignette questionnaires. Maintaining polarised, constant vignettes allows to direct the respondent towards a particular setting, making them less prone to diverge from the questions. However, maintaining vignettes open enough to accommodate for respondent's own experiences and examples, minimises the social desirability bias. This is enhanced by the anonymity and political neutrality of the investigation, which does not encourage the participants to diverge from their true methods and behaviour. This ensures a high validity of results, not tainted by drastically falsified or moderated information. Another strength of the methodology is the grounded analytical mechanism. Using an already established and strict coding mechanism, basing it on appropriate codes from the theoretical framework, contributes to the consistency of the methodology. Because the method of coding is based on strictly established theoretical criteria, from presented meta-categories, the research has a strong replicability potential. The same coding mechanism is attributed universally across different organisations and environments, not only those of public domain, as long as the executive-subordinate dynamic is present to a visible degree. A simple, yet strong methodology, contributes to the validity and replicability of this research. This methodology, however, is not without weaknesses. Because of the nature of the interviews, it is possible to influence and guide the response by asking additional questions or asking for clarification from the respondent. This affects the replicability of the research, as each interview has a different structure. This may also be perceived as a strength due to adaptability of the questions that lead to obtaining better, more accurate answers. Guiding the respondent, however, puts the reliability in question, as the answer may be strongly affected by the interviewer's influence. To mitigate this and assure high reliability of results, the supportive questions and further development were aimed to clarify and answer or directly ask for concrete, structured evidence from given answers. Another identified shortcoming is the data interpretation. Despite a consistent coding mechanism, grounded in scientific literature, the actual data does not ideally reflect it. It means that the data is a subject to partial interpretation for the analyst who, despite heavily relying on established coding criteria, has to extract appropriate phrases and mark them for further interpretation in the analysis. This is remedied by simplification and organisation of the collected data in the process of translation, where stylistic devices or expressions were simplified to present plain information without unnecessary entanglements. While the transcript does not reflect the interview in its entirety, the conveyed information and data is present and appropriately coded. This diminishes the risk of the researcher misinterpreting the data and makes the code more valid and accurate.

While the chosen methodology certainly has weaknesses, the research attempts to mitigate them by making the analysis impartial. This ensures high validity of the research, as data will be accurate and

less prone to misinterpretation. In turn, that makes the research reliable, as the same analytical mechanism and operationalised variables can be used in a different setting or similar nature.

#### **4. Analysis**

This chapter presents the findings of the interviews and evaluates their results based on established theoretical norms. The analysis proceeds through established vignettes, examining each case through the coded evidence from 4 meta categories. Each vignette is briefly restated and then evaluated in separate subheadings where each code is presented as evidence for their leadership style. Such systematic and transparent examination showcases how prominent each behaviour is in the particular context of vignettes, showcased by providing supportive quotes and evidence from the collected data. Additionally, the recorded influence of the covariate of legal constraints and regulation is outlined, describing its moderating influence on the behaviours. After descriptive parts are concluded, the analysis dives into an explanation of why these behaviours are employed, what are the intentions behind them and what are the outcomes. Each subsection summarises the findings for its respective categories, which are used to identify behavioural overlaps, trade offs, draw conclusions and answer the posed research questions.

#### **4.1 Insubordination Motivated by Changes in Bureaucratic Politics**

Insubordination motivated by bureaucratic politics occurs when bureaucrats experience changes in institutions caused by executive decisions to alter internal institutional operations and reallocate resources (O'Leary, 2010; Keulemans & Groeneveld, 2019). Based on this, the vignette was crafted around a scenario where executives are responsible for implementation of a new policy targeting an improvement in public service. However, this also includes slight alteration in internal dynamics and changes in resource distribution within the institution. Because of those changes, bureaucrats are concerned with changes in their individual roles, resulting in them subtly slowing down the implementation process or refusing to take part in it, using internal connections and networks to lobby against it. Executives are faced with difficult situations, with needs to provide public services in accordance with institutional mission on one hand and addressing internal concerns on the other.

##### **4.1.1 Task-oriented Behaviour**

In the perception of subordinates, executives are often viewed as the instigators of organisational changes. This perception is intensified as instructions and changes originate from executive positions, even when driven by external needs/requirements. Executives serve as implementing organs, ensuring the smooth enactment of directives. Their duties include developing action plans, specifying intermediate steps, and allocating resources for institution units (Igulu, 2023). Executives, in the



public sphere, navigate projects often beyond their full control, with teams and departments collaborating in a mutually dependent system of institutional organs.

Because of that, when faced with bureaucratic insubordination, executives “*cannot always allow for resistance. Sometimes we (executives) have to do something, because somewhere higher the established goal has to be reached*” (Interview Transcript, KB). To keep the processes up to speed, they have to take a stronger managerial stand. It manifests itself by (in)directly involving themselves in establishing the plan where the “*goals must be realised (...) and also minimise the resistance and minimise the processes that affect the timeline*” of the project (Transcript Interview, KB). Such involvement is essential when projects and changes must be introduced into the agenda - “*such changes have to be implemented quite often on a small scale, and if certain human elements in the institution do not work together or are missing somewhere, the whole mechanism cannot work as it should*” (Interview Transcript, WD). The importance of the “human element” - in the context of the research, understood as factors that come from preferences/ideologies/habits of a person - is crucial for executive planning, because despite clearly outlined action steps and goals, it may be hampered by personal motives of subordinate bureaucrats. When the project must be implemented, executives “*do the analysis of the project (...) think if this is a good way forward*” (Interview Transcript, MR) to estimate its feasibility, attribute required resources, delegate functions and discretion. Additionally, they have to clarify tasks, communicate priorities and set specific goals that must be achieved. With clarified goals, executives assure that “*there is always the perspective in the back of the (bureaucrat’s) mind that ‘this is our mission, and we may reach the goal in various ways, but the goal remains unchanged*” (Interview Transcript, NK). It solidifies the notion that “*as a rule the project takes precedence*” (Interview Transcript, WD). This behaviour is displayed in the establishment of requirements from subordinate bureaucrats, but also from executives themselves. Because the organisational mission is considered a priority over other concerns, leaders emphasise values like professionalism as a crucial component of behaviour and organisational culture. In difficult situations, the objectives of projects “*have to be executed professionally (...) this is the deciding factor on how to solve these matters*” (Interview Transcript, KK). Clarification is an important aspect of executive task-oriented behaviour. Without it, the institutional mission becomes too fluid, inviting a degree of interpretation to the bureaucratic perspective, which in turn results in “*additional complications and resistance...both matters (...) cause significant delays*” (Interview Transcript, KK). Therefore, it is of great importance that introducing changes in the agenda and adjustments in institutional proceedings are carefully planned and conveyed in a clear manner to the bureaucratic personnel. This leadership behaviour emphasises the importance of the mission, as a core value of the institution, highlighting the importance of clearly outlined priorities and rules. Once in motion, task-oriented leaders engage in monitoring the situation. Executives monitor situations to assure that projects are being carried out in accordance with established plans of action; however, due to the size and interdependency of the institution, that often proves to be difficult. This is why monitoring is deployed directly and indirectly

- by executives themselves or via subordinate managers. Using team leaders as extensions of executives' monitoring capabilities allows them to identify the issues more effectively. This is being compared to a web that passes vibrations from all directions to the centre - *"if certain elements are not connected, that is, they don't fulfil their function, it leads to vibrations coming from a completely different direction"* (Interview Transcript, WD). Employing such structures is a great example of how executives compensate for their shortcomings in supervisory capabilities. This shows the overlap with relations-oriented behaviour, where the leader empowers the subordinating directors to act as an extension of their managerial capabilities. This behaviour is thoroughly explored in the next subsection. Establishment of such interactive webs among managers within institutions pinpoints the issues and outlines the ways executives can respond to it, focusing on one individual, group or units - *"if they (issues) repeat and it's not just coming from one person, it indicates that the problem lies within the institution"* (Interview Transcript, NK). This behaviour is evident in the amount of consultation with other executives. When faced with potential issues within the institution, in this case bureaucrats resisting the changes to the way of conducting operations, it is often not a sole decision of the executive to address it. Because of the significance of the situation, its potential implications and spread to other bureaucrats, a challenge to the executive decision *"because of their (bureaucrat's) own interests (...) is something that has to be consulted with the board"* (Interview Transcript, KK). Shared decision-making and consultation introduces new perspectives into an executive's assortment of actions, developing their problem solving capabilities. Because of the relatively small scale of the changes and bureaucratic insubordination, they can conduct diagnosis and identify problems with surgical precision by pinpointing *"the very difficult matters that appear to be crucial points of conflict"* (Interview Transcript, KB). Once it is identified, aided by outlined monitoring methods, executives can address issues of insubordination in various ways. This depends on the threat the issue poses to the project and how much resources can be spent on addressing it. In an abundance of resources, such as time, and relatively low threat to the project, executives may give additional time and effort to address it either themselves or through subordinate managers, as outlined above. Such an approach manifests by diverting *"these individuals to a side track, ask what doesn't fit, why we disagree, and work out a compromise"* (Interview Transcript, WG). This behaviour occurs only when executives can indeed afford spending additional resources on addressing the problem and is far less prominent when addressing insubordination motivated by bureaucratic politics. Much more commonly perceived approaches consist of harsher measures. If insubordination poses a significant threat to the project, halting its implementation and progression, executives acknowledge *"that certain situations cannot be resolved, and you (they) have to set them aside"* (Interview Transcript, WG). This manifests as an exclusion of elements - individuals or teams - from the task they oppose *"because sometimes it is not possible to spend more time dealing with such cases"* (Interview Transcript, WD). In face of insufficient resources, providing alternative tasks or taking the bureaucrats out of the

current project, is the dominant solution. Evidence of this approach is prominent across all vignettes, which is more exemplified at later stages of the analysis.

Task-oriented behaviour is a very prominent leadership behaviour in face of bureaucratic politics. It focuses on careful planning done by executives that prioritises institutional missions and goals over addressing solitudinous voices of opposition. This is dictated by the nature of work within public institutions - the timeframe and responsibilities are often dictated by (sub)national agendas, which are beyond control of single units in institutions. This means that executives manage only part of a project and can influence only bureaucrats under their jurisdiction, while the agenda encompasses various arenas and institutions beyond their control. With bureaucratic insubordination arising under their jurisdiction, they need to address it urgently since delaying will cause setbacks and overall inefficiency beyond their field. Being a cog in a wider mechanism puts additional pressure on executives, who themselves respond to other directors, political representatives and the public. Employing task-oriented behaviour in face of bureaucratic politics is dictated by the need for fast resolution. Since insubordination occurs on a smaller scale and is motivated by preferences of few subordinates or units, there is little incentive to sacrifice additional resources in tackling this matter. Instead, after clearly outlining processes, goals and responsibilities, they engage in monitoring progress - either themselves or via trusted team leaders - to identify potential issues. When such issues appear, in this case in the form of bureaucrats abstaining from work due to changes in their individual work, executives remove them from the project by passing down responsibilities from a different project. This way, excluded bureaucrats are no longer directly engaged with an activity they opposed, consequently being deprived of bureaucratic discretion. This is not a permanent solution, but rather a manoeuvre to ensure stable progression. Across collected data, a shared element accompanying task-oriented behaviour is the prioritisation of the task - the institutional mission. With the mission being a priority, individual feelings, preferences and opinions of bureaucrats are largely irrelevant. The potential consequences of such delays, for the institution and beyond, is ineffectiveness of the system as a whole where insubordination units slow down the entire process by not fulfilling their function in a proper and timely manner. Despite personal relations and attitudes, it was stated that organisational mission “*goes over your own position. Unfortunately we cannot always allow for resistance. Sometimes we have to do something, because somewhere higher the established goal has to be reached*” (Interview Transcript, KB). Such an approach is not dictated by executives’ preferences, but rather contextual factors. Because of the institutional setting, addressing acts of bureaucratic insubordination enters “*a sphere of regulations, (where) there are no cases of conversations that are personal*” (Interview Transcript, KK). It shows that displayed behaviour during problem solving is heavily moderated and constrained by legal obligations and institutional norms. While it does not completely limit an executive's capacity to act to regulations alone, it is a factor that cannot be overlooked when examining task-oriented behaviour within institutions.

#### 4.1.2 Relations-oriented Behaviour

Concluding from the subsection above, when faced with insubordination motivated by personal preferences regarding the bureaucrats' modus operandi, executives will resort to harsh actions and exclude those subordinates from projects, depriving them of discretion. While it is very prominent, executives also display characteristics of relations-oriented behaviour when facing insubordination, partially overlapping with aforementioned task-oriented behaviour. A leader who is relations-oriented established less formal and hierarchical links to subordinates, showing concerns for their needs and feelings. They support the team, expressing confidence in its capabilities to complete given tasks. In the context of insubordination in public institutions, supporting those bureaucrats is not a practised method due to the mentioned scarcity of resources that can be spent on such matters. Therefore *“in cases of someone's unwillingness to do something because it goes against their interests or feels threatened or less comfortable, professional situation of course...there is no discussion”* (Interview Transcript, KK) and executives express very little concern for those feelings, purely as a supportive behaviour. This behaviour, however, does not mean a complete absence of it from the behavioural responses. While it does not prominently occur by itself - due to the nature of institutional environment that prioritises its mission over feelings of bureaucrats - there is recorded evidence of its overlapping occurrence with behaviours from other meta-categories. This results in new, unique ways of addressing insubordination among bureaucrats by acting in a supportive manner, but not in the pure theoretical image of this characteristic. Supporting goes in pair with monitoring and problem solving characteristics of task-oriented behaviour. Through monitoring the progress of the project, executives are capable of identifying individuals or units that cause problems and solve issues at their source. While purely task-oriented behaviour often dictates to simply exclude insubordinates, adding supporting elements results in executives working together with problematic/insubordinating individuals to *“try to see where these individuals see the problem. And then, either personally, due to authority, or through intermediaries, I (executive) try to reach them”* (Interview Transcript, NK). Much like in previous behaviour, executives act personally or via a network of subordinate managers to address issues, however by being oriented on developing and maintaining relations with bureaucrats, they are willing to spend additional resources on uncovering where these individuals see problems and how they can be resolved. In doing so, leaders express a lot of confidence in their subordinates and their capacity to fulfil tasks, despite objections. Additional resources are used to attempt maintaining the composition of the unit - instead of excluding resisting individuals, their motives being explored and incorporated in the process of problem solving by working out a compromise. A similar course of action occurs when supportive behaviour overlaps with traits of change-oriented behaviour, particularly in envisioning change. Behaving in a supportive manner acknowledges that when introducing changes to internal dynamics and way of working, the *“matter of*

*balancing the need for such changes and the needs of employees*” (Interview Transcript, WG) is a responsibility of the executive. They are responsible for a proper introduction of change into the institution, that accommodates potential objections and allows for adjustments of bureaucrats’ pace and way of work, before making a decision to exclude them. That, however, again calls for additional resources that may not be at disposal of the executives - *“if the situation allows us to sit down, talk, analyse the problem, with one, two, or six people, then, of course, that's the correct course. But then the order is reversed; we have dialogue first and then exclusion”* (Interview Transcript, WG). Aside from supporting the bureaucrats in face of internal changes, executives also recognize the capabilities of individuals and units. While purely relations-oriented behaviour recommends rewards for high performance, an overlap with problem solving results in another unique behavioural approach. In face of higher performance that occurred due to changes in team composition where one *“element (...) showed greater possibilities in the project and we (executives) made a decision to move it to the second level where the work was the greatest. And immediately everything started to go more smoothly, but there were objections”* showed that acknowledging achievements and high performance of a team does not necessarily mean that rewards are being attributed. Contrary, recognition resulted in even more changes that met with bureaucratic resistance. To mitigate the effects (and occurrence) of insubordination, it was stated that bureaucrats must have a sense of mission within the institution, that is put over their personal motives. Such commitment and necessary knowledge is built through developing initiatives. When there is a risk of insubordination occurring on a smaller scale due to change in internal dynamics, executives employ preventive mechanisms in forms of training for bureaucrats to partake. Executives often are too occupied with their duties, therefore *“if such a possibility is not there for me (them) to directly intervene in such incidents, we regularly have training programs and various events aimed at building trust or bonds”* (Interview Transcript, NK). Through such programs, bureaucrats build commitment to their role and environment, developing necessary skills to use in their daily operations. Providing training activities is not the only action executives take when they are unable to personally intervene. As aforementioned, they often rely on subordinate managers and team leaders to implement their agenda and monitor situations. In the context of relations-oriented behaviour, they empower subordinates, delegating responsibilities and discretion for particular tasks. This manifests by empowerment of team leaders or by granting discretion to non-executive bureaucrats. In the context of bureaucratic insubordination, executives delegate authority to team leaders to remedy the situation on their behalf. Executives *“come across a problem in a certain group or a certain person (...) and I (they) appoint you and you to deal with it”* (Interview Transcript, WD). It shows the overlaps between the functions of executives and bureaucrats, but also the extent of executive responsibilities that often take priority over addressing minor, internal issues. With a possibility of empowering *“such matters are delegated to other individuals, to team leaders. So (...) the responsibility for the functioning of the institution rests on me (executive), but the responsibility for the functioning of the team rests on the leaders or chairpersons”* (Interview

Transcript, NK). A unique approach to empowerment was recorded in the data, where executives empowered a bureaucrat from a different department to monitor the project in a different environment. It progresses by contacting other executives, requesting a “*subordinate from their field and say ‘you will not be involved, you will just control the situation’*” (Interview Transcript, MR). It is described as to “*put someone else in the shoes of the author*” (Interview Transcript, MR), delegating discretion and responsibilities.

Relations-oriented behaviour of executives has an underlying motive. While theoretical indicators were identified, they often overlapped with other meta categories, creating unique patterns of behaviour. That, however, changes the meaning of those indicators. Supportive behaviour was employed to work out a consensus with the insubordination bureaucrats. While showing concern for their needs and feelings, the underlying goal was to bring them back on track. To conclude - in a strictly professional setting, supportive behaviour is not focused directly on members’ needs and feelings, but rather on assuring the progression of given projects. It can be said that it is a middle ground for communicating with bureaucrats - acknowledging their feelings and opinions, while simultaneously trying to bring them back on track of the endeavour they resist. Another prominent indicator of this behaviour is empowering. It was deployed for the same reason as in case of a task-oriented behaviour - with limited time and capabilities to address these acts themselves, executives relied on an internal network of team leaders to enact the agenda on their behalf. Additionally, they bestowed discretion of bureaucratic personnel, putting them in a leader’s position. It was done to build commitment to the mission among the bureaucrats, selecting “one of their own” to decrease the significance of executive-subordinate relations. Necessary skills were developed by introducing training sessions for bureaucrats, investing in their potential and capabilities. This enhances the sense of loyalty of the bureaucrats, who see that the institution and executives are willing to invest resources in their careers and skills. Since insubordination occurred on a smaller scale, executives were (occasionally) able to show traits of relations-oriented behaviour. While their primary focus was on the institutional mission and the tasks at hand, they showed concern for members’ feelings and provided support in the forms of training activities and developing consensus, either directly or via other managers who were involved in the decision-making process. The presence of relations-oriented behaviour is moderated by the influence of legal norms within the institutional environment, providing additional explanation for why it does not purely reflect its theoretical image. While there certainly are elements of personal relations, executives cannot solely rely on their personal relations to dictate their behaviour. They “*have to stick to certain guidelines*” (Interview Transcript, WD) which heavily impacts their behaviour when managing smaller acts of insubordination. There is, however, a degree of freedom to which they may bend those regulations, stating that “*within my scope, I have the following options, and I can bend them to this extent*” (Interview Transcript, WG). Therefore, there is a possibility to exercise such behaviour with

insubordinate bureaucrats, trying to understand their perspectives, concerns, and feelings, however a sense of hierarchy and adherence to regulations must be maintained.

#### **4.1.3 Change-oriented Behaviour**

In this vignette, changes relate to reallocation of resources and shifts in power dynamics by restructuring the teams. While they do not change the mission or the entire modus operandi of the institution, it is a responsibility of a change-oriented leader to implement them. Such leaders understand why the internal changes must happen and advocate for them. When they need to implement change, leaders *“act in advance (...) And even after announcing such changes, if there are still concerns or insubordination, then we (they) switch to another course of action”* (Interview Transcript, WG). It shows an overlap with harsher characteristics of task-oriented behaviour, where executives recognise the need for change and enforce it, in face of bureaucratic objections. The enforcement is preceded by preparations and advocating for change which can take numerous forms with varying intensities. When advocating for them, executives must consider that pushing for large changes in their jurisdiction - reallocating many resources and responsibilities at once, significantly changing the power dynamics in the departments - will most likely be met with significant resistance. In face of resistance, instead of advocating for a large reorganisation it is *“better to withdraw such changes and compromise”* (Interview Transcript, WG). When advocating for a large change meets fierce resistance among bureaucrats, the executives need to *“sit down and talk things through, gradually trying to convince them (...) because if the problem is really serious (...) then it is necessary to sit down and talk it through”* (Interview Transcript, WD). This is done by proposing smaller, incremental changes that target improvements in institutional proceedings. As was stated, public service is not *“a production line here and everything runs the same (...) It's such a delicate balance between keeping within those legal rules (...) and at the same time being open enough that such changes are actually made as a simplification of certain processes”* (Interview Transcript, WD). It shows that changes are a necessary component of service within public institutions. Changes that were advocated and implemented by executives, despite resistance, were *“not there for long, as (...) the task has been separated into a separate cell that managed it”* (Interview Transcript, KB). Explaining potential threats and opportunities that the change carries, while pushing for it at an appropriate pace, is an important part of an executive position, as they have the knowledge and function to do it from a position of authority. In face of insubordination, they emphasise that it is *“worth it to sit down and work out the arguments. Present the proposals and think about what we can do about the situation to try to realise the task in the end”* (Interview Transcript, KB). When communicating change, executives need to consider and balance both *“the need for such changes and the needs of employees”* (Interview Transcript, WG). Conveying a clear vision eliminates uncertainties that could be a cause of insubordination and resistance. It is important for the executives to understand what elements of

change can be controversial in the perspective of the bureaucrats, communicating the vision in an attempt *“to bring it closer to what I (executive) think about such initiatives”* (Interview Transcript, KB). This is done by envisioning change in a clear manner, which can be seen overlapping with direct task-oriented behaviour - for an executive to *“tell them (bureaucrats) how I work and I am your boss, you have to adjust to me as this is my way of operating”* (Interview Transcript, MR). Change-oriented behaviour also emphasises innovation as an important aspect of bureaucratic personnel. Executives promote innovation by encouraging bureaucrats to give *“things a try. It makes it easier, and a bit of authoritarian actions yield good effects, just in the long run”*. (Interview Transcript, KB). An alternative to such a push for innovation is to give opportunities to exchange information among bureaucrats *“based on volunteering (...) and if someone wanted to switch to another department for a while, we (executives) looked for suitable substitutes and facilitated the exchange”* (Interview Transcript, NK). Through initiatives, executives facilitate collective learning among the bureaucratic personnel and themselves. With extensive knowledge and skill base, both parties are *“able to draw conclusions and have experiences”* (Interview Transcript, KB) they would not gain in their roles alone. When at risk of insubordination to internal changes, learning collectively expands perspectives and teaches *“how to prevent such situations from occurring, so we (institution) could progress with implementing those changes”* (Interview Transcript, KB).

In the face of insubordination arising due to internal changes, change-oriented behaviour acts as a preparatory mechanism to moderate or even prevent resistance from occurring. The intention behind this behaviour is to expand bureaucratic knowledge on the functioning of the institution, its departments and units, so when the need for change arises, the bureaucrats are familiar enough with its implication and purpose to not resist. Executives advocate and envision change in a clear way, so bureaucratic personnel will be aware of the motivation behind them and will know how to behave themselves. Innovative thinking and collective learning established through systematic, internal activities (like voluntary exchanges among departments) aid the development of awareness. This behaviour is not as prominent when addressing bureaucratic insubordination, because of its preventive nature. Outlining the goals of necessary change and facilitating learning sessions after encountering the resistance requires more time and effort, which executives might not have at their disposal. Therefore a promising strategy for a change-oriented leader is to deploy precautionary measures, instead of reacting to insubordination *ex post*. This way changes are announced and explained in advance to an open-minded and flexible personnel. Because such initiatives are heavily personalised and vary across institutions and positions, institutional guidelines have varying effects on how they can manifest. Allowing the executives to express the characteristics of change-oriented behaviour, with only constraints posed by legal measures and institutional standards.



#### **4.1.4 External Behaviour**

Since insubordination arises due to changes happening internally, behaviour oriented on the external environment is least prominent. Executives function as representatives of figures that also negotiate with other parts of an institution and other governing bodies. In face of insubordination, they “*consult (...) superiors, that such a situation has occurred. Then together (...) work out a decision*” (Interview Transcript, KK) on how to resolve this. This process also takes the form of horizontal communication, seeking advice and contribution, where the executive “*often involve other executives, but indirectly*” (Interview Transcript, MR).

Since insubordination occurs locally - within a team, unit or department - executives do not display high levels of external behaviours. Consultation and negotiations with other parts of public bodies is used to obtain advice on the situation, which potentially means outsourcing the matter to external bodies. There is, however, very little evidence for this behaviour to be used as a response to insubordination that arises in face of minor, internal changes.

#### **4.2 Insubordination Motivated by Ethical Concerns of Bureaucrats**

In the framework of O’Leary (2010), Waldo states that there is an infinite number of possible ethical reasons that cause insubordination among bureaucrats. Personal values are transported into the institutional environment of public service. Bureaucrats are motivated to carry out public services and contribute to the general good, however the perception of it is often distorted by individual factors, like ideologies. In face of institutional proceedings that contradict those values, bureaucrats resist given changes and agendas, as in their perspective their servitude requires defence of values they see as “correct” (Frederickson & Frederickson, 1995). The vignette revolves around an introduction of new tasks that bureaucrats are not keen to follow due to controversial aspects they consider immoral and violating their principles as public servants.

##### **4.2.1 Task-oriented Behaviour**

Insubordination motivated by ethical objections hampers projects on an individual level, where the executives must address dissent on a person-to-person basis. Due to the variety of potential causes, there is little possibility to appropriately plan for addressing such resistance, as if the executives would know that “*there is going to be a problem, then I (executive) should approach it differently*” (Interview Transcript, MR). Regardless of the type of developed plan and attributed resources, ethical concerns “*have an impact on the effectiveness of operations and on the fact that certain matters are postponed. The result (...) is not going to be reached with more resources and this will cause the necessity to adjust later on*” (Interview Transcript, KB). To meet their agenda points, executives need to clearly communicate their priorities. In a majority of institutional proceedings “*there is no room for such objections, because the project has priority. But if there is such a situation, the objections must*

*be serious*” (Interview Transcript, WD). While executives may care about a subordinate's concerns, they “*need to think about higher goals and try to realise the tasks*” (Interview Transcript, KB). With clearly communicated priorities, the bureaucrats are expected to follow. Such obedience is outlined in the “*code of ethics. It is being used towards the bureaucrats, how they should act and according to what they should act*” (Interview Transcript, KK). To mitigate the risk of insubordination, executives “*present these views to the other side*” (Interview Transcript, KB), clearly stating their goals and priorities to bureaucrats. Once executives conduct the diagnosis and identify insubordinate elements, they can take decisive actions to resolve it. Insubordination caused by ethical concerns are solved in two major ways: removing the bureaucrat from the project or shunning the concerns based on the code of conduct. Much like in the case of the previous vignette, executives may simply exclude those individuals from the project - “*...immediately I give other tasks without telling them that they are being excluded. I just bury them in tasks where they don't have time to think about silly things*” (Interview Transcript, MR). This is not an isolated approach, evident in behaviours of other executives who stated that “*not everyone feels the same way and we need to separate the people that disagree because of their own perceptions, by giving them other tasks*” (Interview Transcript, KB). An alternative way of approaching it is to rely on institutional codes and regulations, that mostly do not consider personal, ethical concerns as valid issues. Executives do not have a legal obligation to address issues caused by “*morals or beliefs, if they don't really concern something important which has been overlooked, can unfortunately be written on the internet or we (executives) can sit back and do nothing*”. (Interview Transcript, WD). Because of highly personalised motivations behind insubordination, there has been no recorded evidence of executives employing monitoring to check on progress, indicating a very strict perspective of bureaucrats being “with them or against them” in terms of institutional mission. Compared to previously explored vignette, the planning aspect of task-oriented behaviour is nearly absent, whereas problem solving resorts to even harsher and more prominent methods.

In case of ethical concerns, task-oriented behaviour is employed to eliminate any threats to institutional processes. The clarifying and problem solving characteristics of this behaviour are greatly emphasised in the collected data, compared to others. Executives find themselves in a privileged position when it comes to addressing ethical situations because of institutional rules and approaches to such issues which clearly outline the priority of institutional values over personal values. Because of a very low significance of ethical concerns to the institution, executives can fully exercise their power to exert influence over the process by excluding those bureaucrats without a need to justify their actions or abstain from even acknowledging that such concerns are expressed. This behaviour, while can be perceived as controversial, is an effective tool at the disposal of executives who may simply ignore the voices or acts of insubordination and carry on with the agenda, granting the resistance little to no recognition or effect. This behaviour is greatly moderated by the influence of institutional norms, which “*affect how we (executives) perceive certain matters from the point that was not very*

*important to us or was of ethical concern*” (Interview Transcript, KB). They outline that ethical concerns of individuals have very little significance, therefore even if the executives would like to express different behaviours to the same degree as task-oriented, they (just as bureaucrats) are *“obliged to stay within the scope of our function and work according to the guidelines, not our own ideology or ethics”* (Interview Transcript, WG).

#### **4.2.2 Relations-oriented Behaviour**

To address insubordination motivated by ethical concerns, executives also display characteristics of relations-oriented behaviour. Because the resistance is often motivated by feelings, executives can react to it by showing concern for the needs of their subordinates. Whereas the previous part of the analysis strongly suggests that the executive strategy of addressing insubordination of ethical origins is to disregard those voices, there is recorded evidence of supporting behaviour. When the resisting group is significant, executives emphasised the need to *“stop and see that the institution, meaning people, are saying ‘no’ which signifies a problem”* (Interview Transcript, WD). Such behaviour must be employed, when at risk of losing a significant number of bureaucrats, which would make completing projects impossible. Addressing insubordination on a large scale *“requires a dialogue and (...) listening to the other side”* (Interview Transcript, KB). Because of highly personal circumstances and motivations, executives take a selective approach to addressing these issues - *“in ethical matters it is an individual talk with the subordinate, instead of spreading this across the department”* (Interview Transcript, KK). An alternative way to approach this within the domain of this behaviour is to delegate the matter of managing insubordination to other managers. In case the insubordination spreads from an isolated person to a group and is occurring on a larger scale, executives behave differently. If the executives are *“losing a team because of this ethical situation, that wasn't even a big deal (...) I have to change the project management. (...) as an executive, I am not doing the project. I need to find a motor that will pull it through”* (Interview Transcript, MR). However, relations-oriented behaviour can also enable and even support insubordination, if institutional mission requires it. These are very unique circumstances, where executives require bureaucrats to think and act independently. When institutional responsibility is to deliver a product or a service prone to failures and mishaps, in *“such a case, insubordination is completely justified. I would even say it is desirable because everyone makes mistakes. It is then the responsibility of those individuals”* (Interview Transcript, WG) to identify those issues in the project, raise objections and oppose the implementation.

When it comes to individual cases of bureaucratic insubordination, executives often choose to disregard those concerns. Because of institutional guidelines and regulations, executives do not have responsibility to address it and unless it poses a threat to institutional mission, they can resort to more task-oriented behaviour and shun the voices of opposing individuals. However, in face of insubordination coming from a large group, executives behave in a more relations-oriented way -

addressing the concerns and attempting to work a consensus - because they understand that since the institution is composed of people, they may *“push as much as we want (...) but in the end, if 100% are against it, we have exactly 0% to fight with that”* (Interview Transcript, WD). In the context of ethics, relations-oriented behaviour is mostly motivated by a need to keep the projects on track, which can only be achieved with a cooperating workforce. Therefore, when faced with insubordination, executives resort to individual conversations with the bureaucrats. They also empower other bureaucrats by changing the management to build commitment among the bureaucratic workforce. This enables the empowered bureaucrats to introduce their own values and expertise into the project, which diminishes the ethical concerns they have as they can remedy it themselves. That, however, can only be done in specific cases when such divergence and edits do not disrupt institutional processes in a way that is not desired. Overall, addressing ethical concerns and insubordination at an individual level aims to *“remedy that and help this subordinate to understand the situation”* (Interview Transcript, KK). Shared understanding - including common values and goals - allows projects to progress more effectively, which is the primary goal of relations-oriented behaviour in this context. Its extent, while limited with aspects and recognizing and developing being absent in recorded data, is heavily moderated by the influence of institutional regulations. A prominent factor is the presence of a “code of ethics” that dictates the behaviour of administrators within institutions - *“ethics are outlined for us how to behave in an ethical way (...) brought down to acting in accordance with regulations, laws and the mission we are to carry out”* (Interview Transcript, KK). Because of the presence of such guidelines, relations-oriented behaviour is severely limited, sometimes not allowing (or enabling) executives to behave in a different way than they are outlined to. Executives describe these codes as not *“extremely restrictive, but they affect how we perceive certain matters”* (Interview Transcript, KB). They are in place to ensure that personal factors - feelings, ideologies, opinions - play a minimal role in institutional proceedings, which minimises the need for executives to display a lot of traits of relations-oriented behaviour.

#### **4.2.3 Change-oriented Behaviour**

When faced with ethical resistance to change, executives clearly outline their goals and objectives to allay bureaucratic apprehensions. When introducing a concerning (for bureaucrats) policy agenda, they *“adjust to it and (...) define it differently than the strict regulations and directives”* (Interview Transcript, KB) to present the idea as an opportunity, rather than a mandatory task imposed by management. When at odds with public servants, the recorded response of the executives was *“proposing a change of profession”* (Interview Transcript, MR) or bestowing different tasks, hence changing the range of responsibilities and roles. Change-oriented leaders recognize the value in insubordination, empowering bureaucrats to identify the troubling aspects and raise the matter to appropriate organs. That instance of empowerment, however, is recorded only with one participant,

who expressed the value in empowering subordinates, where objections *“have to go through this process, and it doesn't matter whether they are caused by an actual error or not. So if a problem arises under the title ‘I disagree with this’ I say, ‘Alright, then send it further for investigation’ and that's it”* (Interview Transcript, WG). It is a unique approach, one that was not expressed by other participants in this context.

Change-oriented behaviour is not a prominent behaviour when addressing insubordination of ethical motivation. This is so, because institutions have already embedded codes of ethics that outline desired behaviours. These codes are one of the foundations of institutions, therefore while some ethical objections *“might be right, transportation of certain practical modes of operation is not obvious and practical”* (Interview Transcript, KB). Executives show characteristics of this behaviour to a limited extent by phrasing and delivering visions in a thorough and desirable manner in hopes to sway away ethical concerns of bureaucrats. This is unfortunately heavily moderated by the mentioned *“code of ethical conduct. This makes this directed towards obedience of rules that are binding in the institution”* (Interview Transcript, KK). While there are indicators of change-oriented behaviour, because of their responsibilities and superiority of institutional legislation, it cannot be expressed to a larger degree in this vignette. Because of the nature of bureaucratic insubordination and public organisation, this behaviour seems to be less effective and less used, compared to the previously analysed case.

#### **4.2.4 External Behaviour**

Within organisations, codes of ethics outline behaviour and possibilities for executives, severely limiting their capabilities to act and resources at their disposal. To compensate for these shortcomings, executives look for alternatives outside of the internal environment. External environment is used by bureaucrats as an additional source of resources they may use in face of ethical concerns. Via meetings, connections, and networks, executives build favourable relations with other bodies that have the capacity to act on those issues - *“as a superior, (I) don't always intervene personally. Sometimes there are bodies outside the institution for that, separate committees, and I can refer to them, but most often it's someone else's role”* (Interview Transcript, WG). Being aware of these opportunities and identifying potential threats, ethical considerations also require external monitoring. In case of valid concerns observed by bureaucrats regarding wider, external implications of policy plan - such as potentially controversial or offensive contents - executives may contact external *“directors and say ‘listen, someone could be offended. My team said that we have to do it differently”* (Interview Transcript, WG) on behalf of the team and themselves. External monitoring also enables executives to be aware of standards and requirements for the policies outlined by higher institutions. When striving to implement change, the *“requirement of superiors from the hierarchy, on the highest level, so from the European Commission”* (Interview Transcript, KB) they analyse the external

environment for limitations and rules that may be perceived as a threat by bureaucrats. When such threats are recognised and reported to executives, they negotiate with external stakeholders to address concerns of their subordinates and find satisfying solutions, defending the units' wellbeing and reputation - *"If the campaign is indeed controversial and there are valid arguments, then I need to address it to the ministry. I cannot just leave it when they say no, I will go back to my minister and tell them that this would not work"* (Interview Transcript, MR).

External oriented behaviour is a relatively prominent behaviour displayed in face of bureaucratic insubordination motivated by ethical concerns. Because within institutions the presence of a strict code of ethics makes addressing bureaucratic objections difficult, executives take these concerns and act as mediators by communicating them to higher authorities, outside of their jurisdiction. Building networks among external partners creates a favourable setting for obtaining resources - in this case opportunities and capacity to address ethical concerns - that are not available within the institution itself. Monitoring the external environment for such opportunities, but also for threats, allows for preemptive action by explaining the ethical aspects to bureaucrats as directives from superior institutional organs. By knowing what ethical concerns are within the institution, executives can appropriately represent their bureaucrats in the external environment, defending their opinions and reputation, striving to find agreements and compromises. External oriented behaviour is employed to address the shortcomings in resources and possibilities to address ethical concerns within the institution itself. By addressing and presenting these concerns to external stakeholders, who are capable of managing them, executives display traits of supportive behaviour, compensating for their lack of capacity to act and bypassing the professional limitations to their behaviour. Much like in previous cases, the influence of institutional norms is moderating the behaviour of executives, as *"in the institution is not just subject to our values and beliefs, but there are rules that we have to follow (...) our behaviour, and indeed our approach to such phenomena, is very much dependent on rules"* (Interview Transcript, WD).

#### **4.3 Insubordination Motivated by Changes in Organisations and Management**

Public institutions on a sub-national level find themselves under the influence of national and international bodies. Evolving institutional landscapes and changing norms often shape internal dynamics and change organisational culture. Because such changes impact the general way of working, bureaucrats and political executives alike are experiencing great shifts in the entire organisational culture within their institutions, completely alternating and changing the overall modus operandi. This is additionally motivated by the fact that within institutions, bureaucrats *"work in the way of time intervals, determining the potential for this type of difficulty in institutions to arise"* (Interview Transcript, KB). In this vignette, bureaucrats are determined to preserve the organisational culture and way of conducting daily operations, resisting and delaying the process of implementation

of a new management framework by external forces. This is a difficult situation for the executives, who are locked between obedience to higher institutional forces and loyalty to their institutional culture and subordinates. In such situations *“practically everyone expresses these objections, unfortunately, there is no optimal strategy for dealing with it”* (Interview Transcript, NK). Despite this, executives still take certain actions and adjust their behaviour to address the acts of insubordination. In this vignette, there is an overarching influence of regulations that moderate executive behaviours by forcing them to adopt these changes. Executives have no choice but to follow, therefore each analysed category is already influenced by the institutional requirements.

#### **4.3.1 Task-oriented Behaviour**

In face of insubordination motivated by overall changes to the management framework, executives behave in a task-oriented way by developing short-term plans. Planning, however, is overlapping with characteristics of other behaviours and has not been recorded by itself. When preparing for overall change and addressing insubordination among bureaucrats, executives develop plans together with bureaucrats towards a common benefit. A tactic of incremental adjustments was recorded through the collected data, where one of respondent stated that *“when we encounter such resistance, unfortunately, we have to sit down, discuss the matter, see what can be done about it, and maybe implement it piece by piece”* (Interview Transcript, NK). Developing a plan among executives alone is not a practice that has been recorded in the data. When faced with insubordination to an overall change, collective development of short-term plans is employed. Executives find themselves at a very unfavourable position when it comes to planning. As stated, when faced with a need for an overall change from higher authorities and total resistance from subordinates *“I can try to convince them myself, distribute duties and directives, but the only thing I could possibly do is make changes gradually, with the help of other people”* (Interview Transcript, WD). They empower bureaucrats to share duties of developing a plan for the impending changes, focusing on incremental adjustments over time. In face of such, executives need to clarify what changes are going to occur and for what reason. When outlining new responsibilities and goals, they *“need to approach it (clarifying) by building this in a clear way among existing people”* (Interview Transcript, MR). When such major changes occur, executives express the need to clearly convey the motivations and reasons behind them to address concerns of resisting personnel. In the recorded data, there is an extensive record of problem solving among executives. Much like in case of task-oriented behaviours in previous vignettes, they are often radical. Here the respondents displayed an incredibly unified response, where they *“would not let something like this happen”* (Interview Transcript, MR). This trend is an overwhelming behaviour, where executives *“would have the least restraint to force”* (Interview Transcript, KB) bureaucrats to cooperate and *“would be least difficult (...) to consider forcing the change”* (Interview Transcript, KB). The solution to resolve the problem of insubordination is to

*“simply disagree (...) sometimes the changes are caused by the already established norms in the organisational culture and we just do not want it to change”* (Interview Transcript, KK).

Task-oriented behaviour is employed for two polarised reasons. On one hand, executives side with the bureaucrats who oppose the overall institutional shift. They combine characteristics of relations-oriented behaviour to empower them and together develop an action plan, focusing on incremental changes that prepare the institution for a shift in its management framework. Cooperating and focusing on the task as an institution introduces a decentralised model of behaviour, where both parties work together towards a shared objective, consequently decreasing the prominence of insubordination. That, however, may not always be the case, as if the executives see no option (or cannot allocate additional resources) to resolve the matter of insubordination via cooperation, they will resort to more radical problem solving methods for effective resolutions. They take decisive actions by exercising their superior, hierarchical position to enforce the change. This is dictated not by executives’ preferences, as they may oppose the idea of change as much as resisting bureaucrats. It is dictated by the inevitability of change due to a superior status of institutions that enforce it. In the end, a task-oriented leader understands that such changes are (mostly) beyond their influence and they have a choice to cooperate on this task with subordinate bureaucrats or to enforce the higher agenda that will happen regardless of resistance.

#### **4.3.2 Relations-oriented Behaviour**

As mentioned, when it comes to changes in institutions, executives often are in concordance with bureaucrats who oppose these changes. In the eyes of the executive, the *“objections (...) are justified because the consequences are precisely the collapse of the institution in the form it exists”* (Interview Transcript, WD). They share their concerns, providing support and understanding for objections and listening *“to listen to all they have to say (...) as in the beginning there are a lot of emotions”* (Interview Transcript, KK). Supportive behaviour, much like in the previous category, experiences a lot of overlaps with other characteristics. In addition to supporting, executives also aim to develop their subordinates and aid them in envisioning change, as the *“solution here is mediation, dialogue, maybe additional training programs for employees so that they can see that such changes are necessary”* (Interview Transcript, NK). While being supportive, they also advocate for the necessary changes. Executives who display this behaviour are willing to converse with bureaucrats and *“explain to them how this process is going to work. I (executive) think meetings with the team, but in smaller groups, address particular issues. Focusing on very individual spheres that these people see as most hazardous. This could make the transition easier”* (Interview Transcript, KB). While showing supportive behaviour, executives try to envision how the change will progress, stating that *“in a way they (bureaucrats) are right, but not entirely. Not everything is so black & white as they see. We began with small changes for them to see that there is no tragedy. That we can move forward”* (Interview



Transcript, KK). To address insubordination, executives invest in bureaucrats' development to prepare them for upcoming changes. In face of a drastic shift in the way the institution functions, they recognize that it is of great benefit *“when people can cooperate, that regardless of the mode, they will be able to keep on working”* (Interview Transcript, KB).

In this case, supportive behaviour is used to express support and understanding to bureaucrats' concerns that motivate insubordination. It emphasises the importance of dialogue and negotiations to reach a common understanding on why these changes are happening and what the implications are going to be. The intention of executives is to create a sense of mutual understanding between parties that will alleviate emotions and concerns behind insubordination. Through meetings and conversations, as well as through investment in bureaucrats' development via training sessions, executives aim to establish an open-minded and educated workforce that will be able to accept these changes. They emphasise the need for cooperation among bureaucrats who will have to be able to find themselves in a new setting and work with their colleagues in a new modus operandi of their institution - *“having good contact can break the resistance. I would even call it ‘bestowing knowledge to certain people’ (...) as we know how people act and behave, it can be a big obstacle”* (Interview Transcript, KB).

#### **4.3.3 Change-oriented Behaviour**

In face of large institutional changes, executives advocate these changes to administrative personnel under their jurisdiction. They push for essential changes for the wellbeing of the institution that must keep up with the dynamic environment as *“stagnation in a routine, as it often appears sooner or later, is disastrous to the institution in the context of its effectiveness”* (Interview Transcript, KB). Executives explain these threats to the bureaucrats, advocating for *“small incremental changes, slower, which can result in people adjusting to smaller and bigger changes”* (Interview Transcript, KK) later on. The timeline is an important aspect of envisioning change. Because such large changes are targeting the way institutions function, there is a period of adjustment with benefits and improvements being visible after some time. This is why change-oriented leaders communicate a clear vision of what comes with change, explaining that periods of adjustments *“are moments we learn from and they make the modification of mode of operating easier (...) such situations would yield more good, from the perspective of time”* (Interview Transcript, KB). Communicating the vision to subordinates is crucial. A change-oriented leader is willing to *“sit down, state the matter clearly, why it's happening, and what changes will occur”* (Interview Transcript, WG). This way, bureaucrats are aware of the goals and targets of these adjustments. Executives present the changes as positive developments. While it is definitely a challenging process, they express enthusiasm and state that a *“good mood in faith in the institution made the transition easier”* (Interview Transcript, KB).

Executives strategically employ a change-oriented approach to engage bureaucrats in the intricate process of organisational adjustments, fostering readiness for an imminent institutional transformation. In situations where resistance to change seems futile, executives find themselves compelled to advocate for the impending shifts within bureaucratic circles due to limited alternatives. Through this advocacy, executives meticulously prepare bureaucrats for the unfolding developments. This premise rests on elucidating perceived threats and opportunities associated with the impending changes, under the assumption that the transformative measures will ultimately benefit the institution, even if not readily apparent to the bureaucratic cohort. Consequently, this comprehensive communication serves to mitigate the inclination of bureaucrats to resist the envisaged changes.

Rather than engaging in direct confrontations or counterproductive battles against resistance, executives adopt a proactive stance. They diligently cultivate understanding among bureaucrats through the articulation of a clearly communicated vision. This approach fosters an environment where executives, rather than opposing resistance, focus on steering individuals towards the path of change. The overarching objective is to instil comprehension regarding the trajectory of change and its underlying purpose. In this manner, executives effectively address insubordination not through adversarial tactics, but by imparting knowledge, thereby reducing the proclivity of bureaucrats to resist change.

#### **4.3.4 External Behaviour**

Adopting an organisation-wide change is a shared responsibility and requires a lot of resources. Executives must have favourable relations with other actors and a reliable network that aids change implementation. As stated, when faced with a need for large changes *“I'm not solely responsible for it; it's my network and external individuals”* (Interview Transcript, WD). Through these networks, executives obtain resources, such as opportunities to negotiate and consult changes with external actors. When the change *“surpasses a small team or even a division, when it concerns the tasks that must be realised on a wider scale...then it's obvious we have to solve it at a higher level”* (Interview Transcript, KK). Because changes are initiated by higher authorities - legislative bodies and superior institutions - executives need to show networking capabilities. While superior organs prepare directives and outline the programme institutions must follow, through favourable relationships, executives *“may take certain steps and try to undermine in cases when we think that this is not feasible to implement. Sometimes we are successful in negotiating change in our favour”* (Interview Transcript, KK). The institution is the responsibility, and often the priority of, the executive. They engage with the external environment to obtain resources and defend units under their jurisdiction. However, when faced with an overwhelming change to the entire institution the executives *“in the vast majority of cases (...) would stand on the side of the institution”* (Interview Transcript, WD).

To address instances of bureaucratic insubordination, executives strategically enlist external collaborators who share responsibility for implementing organisational adjustments. This deliberate

choice stems from the efficacy of decision-making alongside partners external to the institution, originating from distinct professional domains, in distributing accountability. Bureaucrats lacking direct subordination to an executive within their own institution find themselves circumscribed in their capacity to counteract such collaborative endeavours. This strategic approach is further motivated by the prevailing circumstances, wherein substantial management changes within institutions often emanate from higher authorities and transcend the boundaries of a singular organisation, necessitating cross-institutional adjustments. Executives leverage their influence to advocate with higher institutions, securing favourable terms and demonstrating allegiance to both their institution and subordinates. However, executives acknowledge the inherent complexity of navigating changes mandated by higher authorities, which may be perceived as ambivalence. This dichotomy arises from a desire to uphold the existing organisational culture while recognizing the inevitability of adhering to externally imposed directives. Executives strategically concentrate on the external environment and collaborate with external actors to articulate bureaucrats' concerns, effectively representing their institution. Despite their advocacy for the preservation of the current organisational culture, executives acknowledge the limited scope for altering overarching directives. Consequently, their focus lies in striking a delicate balance between implementing these directives through incremental changes and maintaining an internal institutional environment characterised by tranquillity, thereby mitigating any further proclivity toward insubordination.

## **5. Conclusion & Reflection**

This work sets out to further explore executive behaviours and strategies for managing resistance from bureaucrats. To do so it poses the main research question of “*How do executives in public institutions behave when responding to acts of bureaucratic insubordination?*” which is answered using behavioural taxonomy of Yukl (2012) to analyse vignettes of situations of bureaucratic insubordination based on O’Leary’s (2010) framework. To further explore and explain these behaviours, an additional subquestion of “*Which type(s) of behaviour prove(s) to be most dominant among executives?*” was posed. Both questions aim to uncover executive behaviours deployed in face of bureaucratic insubordination. Throughout the 3 vignettes, the analysis shows a multitude of (often overlapping) approaches to resistance that executives display in their behaviour.

Executives navigate bureaucratic insubordination by using task-oriented approaches, prioritising clear communication, monitoring mechanisms, and active participation in planning for efficient goal attainment. Ethical objections prompt a steadfast commitment to values, leading to exclusionary tactics as a decisive measure. In comprehensive changes, executives engage in incremental adjustments, empowering bureaucrats and enforcing change when needed. The common thread is an unwavering focus on institutional objectives, proving Hypothesis 1 to be accepted. For insubordination based on personal preferences, a nuanced approach combines exclusion with relations-oriented behaviours. Executives blend supportive actions with monitoring and

problem-solving aspects, fostering collaboration and compromise. A prominent presence of this behaviour accepts Hypothesis 2. In change-oriented strategies, executives advocate for necessary transformations, balance institutional evolution with employee concerns, and encourage innovation. Despite limited expression in ethical contexts, change-oriented strategies focus on outlining goals and empowering bureaucrats. While less prominent, it accepts Hypothesis 3 as part of leadership behaviour. In external behaviour, executives strategically negotiate externally and serve as mediators, compensating for internal limitations by leveraging external networks for resources and support. This strategic focus on the external environment proves effective in managing bureaucratic insubordination and implementing organisational adjustments. This accepts Hypothesis 4, despite its limited presence due to contextual factors of vignettes.

Public institution executives employ diverse strategies to address insubordination, blending preemptive dialogue and training. Prioritising institutional goals, they engage in negotiations and supportive actions to guide bureaucrats. The overlap highlights the effectiveness of a multifaceted approach, emphasising the need for executive strategies beyond a singular type. Varied behaviours emerge in response to the same issue, underscoring the importance of behavioural flexibility. Dominance of one behaviour over another is context-dependent, challenging assumptions about fixed leadership styles. Despite institutional changes under NPM, the significance of central executive figures remains extremely relevant. In the face of bureaucratic insubordination, executives who effectively manage it are invaluable assets to the institution - a contribution not to be underestimated. It leads to a conclusion that none of the hypotheses can be fully rejected, as (even) limited evidence of the use has been recorded in each case. Their prevalence greatly depended on the vignette, showing that different situations required different combinations of behaviours. It further signifies the importance of multifaceted behavioural approach to insubordination that results in a more effective strategy.

These findings fill in the established research gap by fleshing out concrete behavioural patterns of underrepresented executive perspective in face of insubordination. It adds atop of the understanding of why these behaviours are employed, compensating the shortcomings in the descriptive research on behavioural taxonomy. It furthers the understanding by elaborating on the effectiveness of these behaviours in institutional settings. Additionally, it examines how overlapping behaviours are employed to ensure effectiveness of the organisation and address difficulties. This research and its findings successfully fit in the established knowledge gaps, while also maintaining the necessity for further exploration. With high potential for replicability among different institutions and settings, it is a solid milestone in research on executive behaviour towards bureaucratic insubordination. This work has practical implications for executives and bureaucrats alike, showing its cross-disciplinary possibilities. Executives may change their behaviour according to the situation, drawing upon identified strategies to adopt a more effective approach in dealing with insubordination. Bureaucrats

can further understand the behaviour of executives, especially given legal constraints that moderate it. With better understanding between the parties, insubordination and following actions can be addressed more accurately. The findings and methodology can be applied to other public settings as well, however it has to be acknowledged that accuracy of replicated results highly depends on the homogeneity of explored settings as it may have great effects on opportunities to display certain behavioural patterns. This further signifies the need for generalisation and simplification of the findings, to ensure a wider applicability to different settings. To advance the validity of the results further research is eminent. It has to be acknowledged that there are as many unique approaches as there are executives, therefore found strategies and identified behaviours represent but a fraction of possible outcomes. This is a limitation that the research failed to fully overcome due to its setting in a particular and relatively small environment. With further research on this topic, greater data sets can be further operationalised and generalised, developing a universally applicable and identifiable framework of executive behaviours.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### Vignette Questionnaire

<i>Vignette</i>	<i>Questions</i>
<i>Bureaucratic Politics</i>	<p>Reaction Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How would you respond to such resistance within your team?</li> <li>- What initial thoughts and emotions might this situation evoke?</li> </ul> <p>Decision-making Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What decisions would you consider to address this resistance?</li> <li>- How would you balance the need for policy implementation with managing internal political dynamics?</li> </ul> <p>Values and Motivations Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What values do you believe are crucial in navigating bureaucratic politics?</li> <li>- How might your personal values influence your approach in such a scenario?</li> </ul> <p>Experience Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you recall a similar instance from your experience, and how was it handled?</li> <li>- How did individuals around you react in comparable situations?</li> </ul> <p>Reflection Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What potential implications do you foresee for the organisation in handling such situations?</li> </ul>
<i>Ethics</i>	<p>Reaction Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How would you respond to resistance within your team based on ethical objections?</li> <li>- What initial thoughts and emotions might this situation evoke when confronted with ethical dissent?</li> </ul> <p>Decision-making Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What decisions would you consider to address resistance rooted in ethical concerns?</li> <li>- How would you balance the need for policy implementation with managing internal political dynamics, especially when ethical objections are involved?</li> </ul> <p>Values and Motivations Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What values do you believe are crucial in navigating bureaucratic politics, especially when ethical considerations come into play?</li> <li>- How might your personal values influence your approach in a scenario where team members resist based on ethical grounds?</li> </ul> <p>Experience Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you recall a similar instance from your experience involving ethical objections, and how was it handled?</li> <li>- How did individuals around you react in comparable situations where ethical concerns impacted policy implementation?</li> </ul> <p>Reflection Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What potential implications do you foresee for the organisation in</li> </ul>

	handling situations where ethical objections influence policy implementation?
<i>Organisation &amp; Management</i>	<p>Reaction Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How would you address the resistance within your team to the proposed management changes?</li> <li>- What initial thoughts and actions might arise when faced with such resistance?</li> </ul> <p>Decision-making Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What decisions would you consider to navigate the challenges posed by the resistance?</li> <li>- How do you balance the need for implementing new policies with managing internal dynamics and preserving the existing organisational culture?</li> </ul> <p>Values and Motivations Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What values do you believe are crucial in successfully navigating organisational changes?</li> <li>- How might your personal values influence your approach in managing this scenario?</li> </ul> <p>Experience Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you recall a similar instance from your experience, and how was it handled?</li> <li>- How did individuals around you react in comparable situations involving organisational change?</li> </ul> <p>Reflection Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How does this scenario align with your understanding of organisational change and management dynamics? What potential implications do you foresee for the organisation in handling such situations?</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2 Coded Transcripts

### Transcript (KK)

(...)

Me: I will record the audio as I will make a transcript later and directly translate it. As I sent you, there are 3 broad scenarios with few subordinate questions each. Perhaps it would be best to go scenario by scenario?

Them: Alright.

Me: So scenario 1 - You are responsible for implementing a new initiative to improve public services. This involves a significant reallocation of resources and restructuring of departments in the jurisdiction. During the introduction, you have encountered unexpected resistance from a group of mid-level bureaucrats. These employees express concern about potential changes in their roles, reporting structures and power dynamics within the organisation. They have ties to other departments and use internal networks to lobby against proposed changes. Despite clear directives from the relevant office, bureaucrats subtly slow down the implementation process, use their own connections to gain support for their cause within the organisation, and strategically use internal politics to resist change. First question, what would be your reaction to this?



Them: I will be speaking from the perspective of an executive that works in this particular institution. If I encounter such a situation...I understand that lower level bureaucrat, you just mean subordinates? It doesn't matter, these are just employees

Me: Yes, yes

Them: Okay, so...I would be displeased. **But I would be angry because they prioritise their own interests over our mission - so the public good. This is dictated by the rules and we have to follow the outlined rules and regulations**, and do not follow our own interests. Particularly if they use their own networks in the organisations to halt the implemented changes.

Me: Alright. And what reactions? You said displeased, angry.

Them: Yes, definitely displeased.

(...)

Me: And what decisions would be considered to combat such resistance?

Them: **I would definitely like to consult my superiors, that such a situation has occurred. Then together we would work out a decision, how to tackle this and what to do.**

Me: Okay, to contact your superior

Them: Yes.

Me: And how would you balance the implementation of the projects and the need to address internal challenges? Do we push both things forwards at the same time?

Them: Well, this is very hard. Because unfortunately in this institution, matters are always proceeding slowly. **Additional complications and resistance...both matters, would cause significant delays.** Again, this decision would be discussed with superior executives regarding what is happening. Regarding the situation that happened...an overall example, **in such a situation with such subordinates that undermine the decisions, the changes, because of their own interests, this is something that has to be consulted with the board. You need to do what you have to do, not what you would like to do or what you don't want to do. They have to adjust.**

Me: And what about the values that you find crucial in such internal situations?

Them: I would say its professionalism. Some things must be discarded, like your personal interests and opinions. **You need to maintain professionalism as we are bound by law. Objective thinking and professionalism are crucial.**

Me: So there is less space for HR-styled operations, like in private sectors. That there is no talk with an HR lady about our feelings and opinions, we just need to push things forward?

Them: Yes, exactly.

Me: And what values affect you, as an executive?

Them: Well, I would say responsibility. These emotions I encounter...if there is a situation like this, I prioritise the project and task fulfilment. They have to be executed professionally. For me, this is the deciding factor on how to solve these matters.

Me: And do you have a similar situation, how did you approach and solve this? Because you said these are usually solved by moving the matter to other people. Is it effective?

Them: Well, there aren't too many situations like this. There were not. But those that were, were solved this way. But nothing particular. All directives were implemented.

Me: And how did people react? For example, under you?

Them: Well, obviously they were sulky.

Me: And in case of sulks, do you approach it in a less formal way or do you try to maintain this approach?

Them: In these cases, with such problems that appear to be solvable on a personal level... as we are "moving" in a sphere of regulations, there are no cases of conversations that are personal, human. Just typically institutional. In cases that consider ethics, it looks different. But in cases of someone's unwillingness to do something because it goes against their interests or feels threatened or less comfortable, professional situation of course...there is no discussion.

Me: I see, there is no discussion and we just carry on with the project. And the last questions from this scenario, what potential consequences do you see for the organisation in tackling these matters? Or there are no consequences, we just move forward without addressing it?

Them: The consequences are...these situations need to be analysed on the, lets say, meetings of the board. In our institution, the executive gives directives to the team leader, and during a meeting of the department they touch and discuss these topics. If such situations occur in one department or even few...they need to be addressed overall regardless. I am not sure if these situations occur this way, this is just my way of understanding how things are. This is on the basis of the department.

Me: So things are kept internally in departments, so they do not spread.

Them: Yes

Me: Alright, I see. That was the last question for this scenario. Now we will move to ethics.

Them: Oh, it is a difficult matter.

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Me: As an executive, you support an initiative in line with campaign promises. However, the initiative faces internal resistance, especially from bureaucrats who express strong ethical objections to certain aspects of the proposed policy. They believe the policy contradicts their personal values and

principles. Despite their strong support for the initiative, they refuse to fully implement aspects they consider ethically controversial. They argue that their role as public servants requires adherence to a higher ethical standard, even if that means resisting certain policy directives. Because of ethical concerns, bureaucrats selectively implement the directive, leaving out elements they consider controversial. They may also voice their objections in internal meetings, highlighting the ethical challenges they see in proposed projects. And if you encounter this situation, or have encountered such a situation, what would your reactions be in your environment, caused by ethical concerns?

Them: Well, I would say these are difficult matters, because when we encountered such problems, it was approached with a different perspective. In the institution, **we have our code of conduct. And code of ethics. It is being used towards the bureaucrats, how they should act and according to what they should act.** Mainly it is the matter of obeying the binding rules and regulations, working according to those elements that we are assigned under. In situations when there is a task to be realised and someone has objections caused by ethics, personally I never met a strong case when someone straight up refused...our institution does not work in a sphere where ethics could be a cause of a problem or cannot carry out a task because of their self consciousness. It is a hard question. Could you give me an example?

Me: For example the hiring projects, with different classes of business, like metal work or medicine.

Them: Ah yes.

Me: What if one would be very dominant, let's say the metal work sector, something that does not economically match the region as we would not be able to compete with others. And our ethical duty as the residents of this region, we do not agree to work with this project due to the wellbeing of our region. What would be the actions taken in such a case?

(...)

Them: Such situations...there is no option that we do not carry out a project. This example requires its own analysis, as in the case of the mentioned categories, there is a possibility of something new. The society can always pitch a new idea or that they disagree, that the current direction is not good for our region. In such cases, **we must obey, not because of ethics but because these are our duties as they are outlined in our range of responsibilities.**

Me: So there is a must to set ethics aside and do the work.

Them: Yes, you could say so. Here, **ethics are outlined for us how to behave in an ethical way, ethics is brought down to acting in accordance with regulations, laws and the mission we are to carry out. We cannot stray outside of the field we are designed to operate in.**

Me: Alright, that answers the second question. What decision would you consider to address such resistance?

Them: This is a matter, that as a superior I have to, and there were situations like that, that such talks took place about their concerns and we **made an attempt to remedy that and help this subordinate to understand the situation.**

Me: To work out a consensus?

Them: Yes, we have to work this out.

Me: And how to balance the implementation of the current project and the need to address the ethical concerns?

Them: **If it concerns a portion of people, it requires a removal of these people from the current task.**

Me: So it cannot stay still, the project must go on?

Them: Exactly, it cannot be brought to a halt.

Me: And how your personal values may affect your approach to such situations?

Them: Well, this certainly isn't...I am just human. This all can affect me, but just like in a previous scenario and questions, I am required to prioritise my professionalism over this. But if I would behave in an ethical way I would have to address the matters to my superior.

Me: Can you remember any situations like this? What kind of approach or methods did you implement?

Them: It was a very long time ago, when I was a lower level bureaucrat myself. Someone from the top level would suggest through their subordinates that they have to make this particular choice, as a supervisor. In accordance with the directive, such actions had to be taken, but I personally did not sign my name under this directive.

Me: I understand. And how did people react around you in this situation, in your team, did they disagree? How did it go?

Them: In case of such situations...well, **here in ethical matters it is an individual talk with the subordinate, instead of spreading this across the department.** These are much too personal matters sometimes.

Me: And what potential consequences do you foresee for the organisation in tackling these matters?

Them: Occurrence of such a situation is a catastrophe for the institution. Best is to avoid such situations, but this is the matter of...**here we have the code of ethical conduct. This makes this directed towards obedience of rules that are binding in the institution.**

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Me: Thank you. And now to the last scenario (...) The institution has received a directive from higher authorities to introduce a new management model. The change is seen as necessary to align the institution with broader organisational goals and practices. While initiating the implementation, you encounter resistance from factions among the bureaucratic staff. This resistance stems not only from a natural discomfort with change, but is deeply rooted in the existing organisational culture that the team is determined to maintain. It expresses concern that the proposed changes may jeopardise the efficiency of certain processes and alter the established way of operating that they believe contributes

to the success of the institution. The manifestation of this resistance is evident in their reluctance to adopt the new model, and some employees may even actively oppose or delay the implementation process. This poses a significant challenge as you seek to strike a balance between adherence to the directives of higher authorities regarding organisational change and respect for the values ingrained in the current organisational culture. And the same base question: what would be your reactions?

Them: Well, I could simply disagree. Such situations happen and happen. As you said, sometimes the changes are caused by the already established norms in the organisational culture and we just do not want it to change. This, let's say, it's pretty bad. It just cannot be like this. In such situations, what I did was to listen to all they have to say, waiting a little, as in the beginning there are a lot of emotions. It fuels it and it also affects me. Regardless, small incremental changes, slower, which can result in people adjusting to smaller and bigger changes.

Me: So small additions and movement forward, with an objective to reach the goal, because of higher directive?

Them: Indeed, a higher directive. Sometimes...very often this is a change for the better. But of course there are some bad changes that can cause...they can just carry a mistake that can cause something unpredictable. This of course can call for our action to change, but we know how it was with European Commission negotiations that they prepare a directive and outline of the programme, how it has to look at, and we are required to follow, regardless if it matched our region or not. However, we may take certain steps and try to undermine in cases when we think that this is not feasible to implement. Sometimes we are successful in negotiating change in our favour, but sometimes even if we think that this is going to be very hard to implement, it is a big change in our organisation...well, with incremental changes later we see that this comes out for good.

Me: Okay. So you said that you yourself may also be unhappy, you also talked about the incremental changes and pushing forward. How would you balance the need for introduction of new policy and the internal management dynamics?

Them: Well, this is hard. Some things will go slow. Some things can be carried out faster without such opposition

(...)

Me: As a person who works in this organisational culture, with your own methods and ways, would your personal factors affect your actions in such cases?

Them: Well, coming back to the first statements, my personal views, emotions and considerations...they may have no significance.

Me: Can you recall a similar situation and how was it solved?

Them: Like I said in the beginning, there was a situation like this in the department when there was a total resistance of the team. And personally I agreed with them, that in a way they are right, but not entirely. Not everything is so black & white as they see. We began with small changes for them to see that there is no tragedy. That we can move forward.

Me: And did you, as an executive, feel responsible for those changes and show that its not that bad?

Them: Yes, however this isn't a comfortable situation.

Me: And how did people around you react in these situations?

Them: Well, they resisted. Even when we started the changes, and it seemed calmer, between each other I knew they talked.

Me: So it caused a sort of a division between an executive and subordinates?

Them: Yes, yes, yes.

Me: And in cases of such separation?

(...)

Me: So there is a separation caused by the conflicts between executives and subordinates. And the last question, what potential consequences do you foresee for the organisation? Can it spread, do we deal with it internally?

Them: Well, it depends what kind of matter that is. *If it's on a scale that surpasses a small team or even a division, when it concerns the tasks that must be realised on a wider scale...then it's obvious we have to solve it at a higher level*, otherwise it cannot be mitigated.

Me: So it is being dealt with at a higher level.

Them: Yes.

(...)

## **Transcript (KB)**

(...)

Me: In Scenario one, you are responsible for implementing a new initiative to improve public services. This involves a significant reallocation of resources and restructuring of departments in the jurisdiction. During the introduction, you have encountered unexpected resistance from a group of mid-level bureaucrats. These employees express concern about potential changes in their roles, reporting structures and power dynamics within the organisation. They have ties to other departments and use internal networks to lobby against proposed changes. Despite clear directives from the relevant office, bureaucrats subtly slow down the implementation process, use their own connections to gain support for their cause within the organisation, and strategically use internal politics to resist change. I forgot to ask your permission to record the audio for the interview, as I will need to directly translate it into english as I will listen back to it, I hope it is not a problem?

Them: No, of course not

Me: The first question about your reaction to such resistance in your team

Them: It for sure raises some concerns. I think I would also... firstly I would attempt to stand in front of the situation. I would try to understand the other side. It is also the matter if I would be personally convinced that such change would bring about the desired effect, because it would be much easier for me to direct towards it... maybe not in an authoritarian towards the desired effect, but definitely I think when we are personally convinced about the arguments for change, then it is easier to operate than being against in in the other group. We need to adjust to certain directives and assumptions given from the top.

Me: I see. So it would be important to see it from their perspective?

Them: That too. And try to bring it closer to what I think about such initiatives.

Me: And what decisions would be made in face of such resistance?

Them: Well, always in such situations it is worth it to sit down and work out the arguments. Present the proposals and think about what we can do about the situation to try to realise the task in the end. We need to work out a solution... in spheres that are the hardest and focus on cancelling those effects and work out how to prevent such situations from occurring, so we could progress with implementing those changes. Such analysis of both sides.

Me: So to write down the pros and cons to understand both sides.

Them: Yes. And to focus on the very difficult matters that appear to be crucial points of conflict.

Me: And when there is an ongoing, time-sensitive project, how would you balance the project management and inside dynamics? Does one have a priority or not?

Them: Well, in work, our goals must be realised. So I think we would have to try and reach the goals, and also minimise the resistance and minimise the processes that affect the timeline. In all situations, such matters... the new matters are something to be faced. This always causes unrest and usually is a difficult topic, but until we actually try it, then there are only speculations. I always say that we need to face uneasy matters to be able to draw conclusions and have experiences from it, and not think about "what would happen if".

Me: I see, so a very pragmatic approach. And in such situations, what values are crucial for you?

Them: I think the approach to these matters goes over your own position. Unfortunately we cannot always allow for resistance. Sometimes we have to do something, because somewhere higher the established goal has to be reached.

Me: (...) can such an approach be perceived as a common characteristic of the public sector? As in the private sphere such actions are often met with talks, often a "pat on the shoulder" whereas here we need to put the mission of the institution higher than ourselves?

Them: Yes, this is related to the character and structure of the institution we work at, because not always there is space to raise concerns and oppose. In the end, we are all at the low rank of the task itself, and we know that if our steps can cause problems elsewhere, then we have to realise our task in a way to make it successful. It is possible and it arises from the mindset of where we work.

Me: I see, then perhaps you already answered about your personal values. Would you like to add anything?

Them: No, I think no. It is easiest to have the notion that this is what it is. It is good and worth giving things a try. It makes it easier, and a bit of authoritarian actions yield good effects, just in the long run. If we try to convince everyone to take certain challenges and we know how to back this up. Unless we are closer to these people it is clearer than giving directions.

Me: So it's important to think in the long term? And to have a bigger picture in mind?

Them: Yes.

Me: Do you have any situation like this and how was it solved?

Them: Well, I'm not sure if this could be exactly this situation, but previously I worked in a different department. Suddenly because of environmental changes in the institution in terms of regulations, we had to separate certain processes from other departments. It was difficult because the process required submission of reviews, as we were concerned about our possibilities and competences will be sufficient to meet those changes. We first got some signals, then a written form, that we have to do it. The team tries to argue against it, the executive agrees that it will be difficult, but not impossible, yet problematic. The executives made the decision, and in the end we had to do it. But it turned out it was possible to change, yet it was not easy nor pleasant, but it is an example that convincing the team that we are obliged to follow...after a while it turned out that the team...the task in the team was not there for long, as in one and a half year the task has been separated into a separate cell that managed it. But still, if the situation would be different and we would still decide to oppose...I don't know how this situation could work out. Sometimes it is worth showing goodwill and openness, to prove that the task is impossible, rather than just talk about it because of your convictions.

Me: I see, then you also answered another question about your experience. And last question, what potential consequences do you see for the institution?

Them: I think generally it is not something that will have a significant impact on institutional proceedings. We are not a separate organisation and certain matters can cause serious problems somewhere else. I think that consequences could be seen after a while.

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Me: These were all scenario 1 questions (...) As an executive, you support an initiative in line with campaign promises. However, the initiative faces internal resistance, especially from bureaucrats who express strong ethical objections to certain aspects of the proposed policy. They believe the policy contradicts their personal values and principles. Despite their strong support for the initiative, they refuse to fully implement aspects they consider ethically controversial. They argue that their role as public servants requires adherence to a higher ethical standard, even if that means resisting certain policy directives. Because of ethical concerns, bureaucrats selectively implement the directive,



leaving out elements they consider controversial. They may also voice their objections in internal meetings, highlighting the ethical challenges they see in proposed projects. The questions are very similar, but what would be your reaction, your first actions?

Them: Well, in every situation, and particularly when there are some ethical concerns, it **requires a dialogue and in such cases listening to the other side is a crucial task**. My reaction...I would definitely like to hear their arguments.

Me: I see, so similar to writing the pros and cons.

Them: Yes, however in case of objections related to...if I understand, certain conviction, it would be much difficult. As here it is a very individual matter that comes into play.

Me: And in such individual cases, that really make the project realisation difficult, what decisions would you realise? Anything extreme, like excluding these individuals?

Them: Yes, this is a final solution if we have to reach the goal. We need to **shift the weight from people who have this degree of ethical concerns. Because not everyone feels the same way and we need to separate the people that disagree because of their own perceptions, by giving them other tasks. In every team it is possible in a way, to solve this in an optimal status of the team, so these people who disagree can manage something else or take part in the project in a limited way.**

Me: And how would you balance the need to carry out the task but also not to ignore the subordinates? Do you prioritise one or do you manage the situation at the same time?

Them: **Prioritisation is crucial, not always it is perfect to balance those matters and reach a satisfying consensus. We need to think about higher goals and try to realise the tasks** and actually accomplish something. It is hard for me to think of a more optimal way to plan this.

Me: And what values do you consider crucial when you consider ethical matters?

Them: Well, this is a difficult aspect. Because of course if we reach consensus then reaching the goal is easy. But if we disagree...I think everyone finds difficult matters at work. Ethics, in particular, is an important matter, but in the end **we do what we agree and we just need to look over what we are doing and see the goal in the end.**

Me: And your personal values and conviction could affect it? If you are responsible for a project, but there are ethical objections that you agree with, how would it influence your behaviour?

Them: If I would agree, **I would also try to present these views to the other side. If I could conceive of it, it would be easy for me to do so.** It would be harder if this is a matter...when we work, not always we can let ourselves be such comfort and abstain from working on what we disagree with.

Me: And can you recall any situation like this, how was it solved and what reactions arose from other people?

Them: Currently we encounter such a situation, but the weight of the difficulty is reversed. I mean that **there are certain requirements imposed on institutions...I would not call them extremely restrictive.**

but they affect how we perceive certain matters from the point that was not very important to us or was of ethical concern. Of course in the moment when we got the information that it is a requirement of superiors from the hierarchy, on the highest level, so from the European Commission, then certain resistance appeared, accompanied by long meetings and attempts to resist as it was...messed up. It was going completely the wrong direction and the need was exaggerated. Regardless, the institutions that required us to operate us in these frames, forced us to adjust and currently we are on the way to implement these changes. Of course at every stage we have concerns, but we try to adjust to it and we try to define it differently than the strict regulations and directives. We simply try to adjust it to our situation, here and now, and we try to find the solutions that on one hand satisfy the requirements, but on the other would let us function without interference. Because that also caused different processes that could paralyse certain elements of our work. It is a very broad description, but this is a matter of very ethical, related to broad conflicts of interests. While it might be right, transportation of certain practical modes of operation is not obvious and practical.

Me: Thank you for your answer. And last question, what potential consequences do you see for the organisations in face of such difficulties?

Them: Well, I think this could have an impact on the effectiveness of operations and on the fact that certain matters are postponed. The result we could reach without issues, is not going to be reached with more resources and this will cause the necessity to adjust later on.

Me: Thank you, this was the last question about ethics.

(...)

Them: It was difficult To justify myself...the executive role is extremely hard. In the moment when such aspects, with which we don't agree, and we are in the current moment, this causes additional difficulties. Let's move to the third part.

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Me: The institution has received a directive from higher authorities to introduce a new management model. The change is seen as necessary to align the institution with broader organisational goals and practices. While initiating the implementation, you encounter resistance from factions among the bureaucratic staff. This resistance stems not only from a natural discomfort with change, but is deeply rooted in the existing organisational culture that the team is determined to maintain. It expresses concern that the proposed changes may jeopardise the efficiency of certain processes and alter the established way of operating that they believe contributes to the success of the institution. The manifestation of this resistance is evident in their reluctance to adopt the new model, and some employees may even actively oppose or delay the implementation process. This poses a significant challenge as you seek to strike a balance between adherence to the directives of higher authorities regarding organisational change and respect for the values ingrained in the current organisational culture. Maybe you could use the same example, but perhaps from a different perspective? How would you react to such resistance?

Them: Generally, this scenario seems to be the most probable one. I think the fact that we work in the way of time intervals, determining the potential for this type of difficulty in institutions to arise. It happened multiple times, where such difficulties always caused discomfort, however I think that this

would be least difficult for me to consider forcing the change. Because even if we are realising something over the years...personally it would not be very problematic to adjust to a new way of operating. I think stagnation in a routine, as it often appears sooner or later, is disastrous to the institution in the context of its effectiveness.

Me: So the first thought would be that there is a task at hand and we have to power through to it?

Them: Yes, exactly. With this scenario, I would have the least restraint to force them.

Me: And how would you balance the “forcing through” the new model and still maintain the organisational culture? Or you would not mind such a change and you would welcome it?

Them: Well, here a big role plays the informal contacts between people. It always...when we can talk about it in the team, and the team has their own internal relations, it really depends on the way in which the institution is managing the informal relations. It is crucial in situations when people can cooperate, that regardless of the mode, they will be able to keep on working.

Me: You also mentioned the crucial values, but what about your personal values that affect your behaviour in managing such scenarios?

Them: In such instances I can even focus on individual cases, where it would be proper to explain to them how this process is going to work. I think meetings with the team, but in smaller groups, address particular issues. Focusing on very individual spheres that these people see as most hazardous. This could make the transition easier.

Me: And could you recall any situation like this? And how was it solved?

Them: Well, when you work in the cycles of financing...about 6 years ago, there was a total change of mode of operations, how we do our work, team composition...it just had to be done, the character of work had to be changed. There was no space for discussion, as the alternative ways simply to find another place for employment. And to me it seems that the previous model of operating was characterised by being outdated. A good mood in faith in the institution made the transition easier. Looking from the perspective of years, I see a need for such situations, because suddenly there is movement and rearrangement of positions between people who usually sat next to each other. It would appear to me that having good contact can break the resistance. I would even call it “bestowing knowledge to certain people” (...) as we know how people act and behave, it can be a big obstacle.

Me: So our knowledge affects our perception of how the end result will look like?

Them: Yes, this has an effect on it.

Me: I think that also answers the reactions of other people. And what consequences would you perceive for this institution in such cases?

Them: Well, certainly in the beginning of such revolt, it is the hardest. For the workforce, for the institution, for the tasks at hand...we definitely meet the most resistance and difficulties in moments like this. These are moments we learn from and they make the modification of mode of operating easier. But it would appear that such situations would yield more good, from the perspective of time.

It is very important to consider the matters of time, as such revolutions have their own effect...it needs to be considered.

Me: Thank you, that was the last question. Would you like to add anything or have any questions?

Them: No, thank you. It is a difficult topic, it is much easier to talk about concrete when we are in such situations, then it is easiest to think about it. And of course it is most difficult to manage the emotions, as they play a major role in all scenarios (..) A lot of variables can affect the direction we proceed to, then it's hard to back away

(...)

### **Transcript (MR)**

(...)

Me: So we start with scenario 1, where you are responsible for implementing a new initiative to improve public services. This involves a significant reallocation of resources and restructuring of departments in the jurisdiction. During the introduction, you have encountered unexpected resistance from a group of mid-level bureaucrats. These employees express concern about potential changes in their roles, reporting structures and power dynamics within the organisation. They have ties to other departments and use internal networks to lobby against proposed changes. Despite clear directives from the relevant office, bureaucrats subtly slow down the implementation process, use their own connections to gain support for their cause within the organisation, and strategically use internal politics to resist change. And this is the first scenario with a few questions...

Them: Let me already answer that. If we can adopt such conceptions...can we?

Me: Yes

Them: I have been in such a situation many times, maybe not exactly the same as I am from an IT background. I know more about networks and programming, but I clash with such situations very often. In the introduction of small changes, where I need my subordinates to do anything differently, then the situation is always looking at me wanting them to work in a different way, that would make it easier for them, because I often meet such situations where two departments fill in the same data in Excel. But when I see such things, I try to make it easier for them and in the moment when one person does it, it has to be visible to the other one. And what happens when I swing by and say "we have to do this differently". When Ms Krysia does one entry, Ms Zosia has to see everything. My first reaction is "oh great" but I don't even get to leave the room, and Ms Zosia calls on me and says "the new one has come and I had to do something else". So it doesn't matter if it makes it easier for them, there is automatically a resistance. Analysing why this is happening and why...when you enter and direct the work in a different way than they are used to...I tell them that I know for years you have been doing it this way, you put the glass 10cm forward, but now I want you to put it sideways. They ask me "why do you want me to put it sideways, whereas I did it forward for 10 years". As I said, I don't even manage to enter another room, they already know what I wanted and apparently for them it's a colossal effort to adjust. The most important thing is, I tell you what I do and how I react. How it works in a private company, as I have a lot of experience in the private sector, compared to my time in a public institution, there I just give the directive and it doesn't matter, it has to be fulfilled. That's how

it looks. But here, to do something without any pain. I have to find 2-3 allies in my team that will think that my idea is actually theirs. And when I stop entering all the rooms, doing all for them (...) to overlook the entire process, I need 2 to 3 people from their environment who will overlook all on my behalf. That's how it looks. When it comes to all projects that you spoke of, this is the way to do it. If I have to do it, I select another author for my project.

Me: So you create a little network of subordinates that cooperate with you. They internally lobby for you, so the process is indeed carried out as you want it.

Them: Precisely that. I give them tasks, flexible tasks, and I always make them an author of my idea. And they are proud of themselves that they did it and it doesn't bother me, because it is not important to me. I care about the goal being reached.

Me: And you said that you often meet such situations, and what is your first reaction, thoughts and actions? Aside from creating the networks?

Them: First I always do the analysis of the project, I think if this is a good way forward. I don't know everything, I often involve other executives, but indirectly. As a vice-minister, I often consult others if this makes sense. Then I take a subordinate from their field and say "you will not be involved, you will just control the situation". This is indirect governance, as if I would try to do it linearly I would have to give tasks to other directors. And that would take extremely long before we reach the goal. That's why it's easier to do it indirectly, with a subordinate on a lower level. Identical situation is, when I get a message from the Ministry that I have a new project, I also put someone else in the shoes of the author. This is my way of governing, my apologies, but everyone has their own way of management. Me, personally, got convinced by the regional government. As the vice-mayor, I tried to implement a private sector solution. I got accused of mobbing within the month. This is very hard to come from the private sector to public. Because there, management is completely different.

Me: Thank you for telling me, I was considering switching my thesis to this topic (...) and how would you balance the need to implement the project and manage the internal dynamics, so the situation doesn't get worse?

Them: Well, if one of my teams doesn't work very well because the leader is... assertive is bad work. He thinks he knows best... these are difficult situations that make it hard to keep the project on track, as it switches to the personal track of the team leader. Because the team leader has a big lobbying circle, internally and externally, these are difficult governing matters. You see that your plans are being implemented really slow. In such situations, it is very official management. Everything has to be documented, via emails, recorded, with everything related to this matter... I of course do everything via my managers, but I do not give anything verbally, everything I do in a written form. Unfortunately it has to enter such an official tone. I am not happy about it, but this is also my human factor, because I am a person who likes to communicate and despite (...) I am not capable of coordinating 90 tasks just with my head, I need to assist myself. But certain things can go even beyond project managers, maybe not big projects but smaller tasks. But in a situation when I have one manager going his way only, I need to outsource it to the other manager.

Me: So communication is your core value, your management style. Any other values you consider a key?

Them: Humanity, but to a limited extent. Because in a moment when human relations go too far, we lose professionalism. I often meet with a situation...as I do not let myself be addressed as “Mr Minister”, I always want to be addressed by name. In Poland it is being misunderstood, as I met with instances where people started treating me like a friend. We are, but in official relations that does not change anything. On one hand, I would really like for it to not be “Mr Minister” all the time, as it bothers me, but despite you calling me by my name, it doesn't mean that you can just abstain from work.

Me: So you want to preserve an internal dynamic and hierarchy, with the titles being secondary, yes?

Them: Exactly. You see, this is a problem with remote work. When someone is working at the home office, and they don't respond on teams, it gets me annoyed really quickly. Because I gave permission, I didn't have to, but I did. And I am not getting quick responses which makes me wonder if they work or not. To my understanding, at the home office you work, and if you work, then you have to answer questions.

Me: Do you have an impression that it affects your approach or does it make you “unbiased”, as you do not let human factors into your work?

Them: I absolutely let them in. I need to display my dissatisfaction, and to a great extent it works well for the team, aside from this one I mentioned. After 3 attempts with my manager to organise certain matters, we just started doing things in a written, official way. And of course this...when I am unhappy with someone, **I just tell them how I work and I am your boss, you have to adjust to me as this is my way of operating.** And if you want to work nice and smoothly with me, then you have to adopt my approach. And in moments when they understand my way of operating, fast and a lot, then we enter a nice relationship and the projects are being fulfilled in an incredible way. If I can give you the latest example of a project, where we promote Poland through sport activities, in a team of 6 people we manage 40 teams on a European level, in Poland. The entire programme is taken care...I worked 8 months on this project and currently I barely have anything to do with it. This is how well it is working.

Me: So you push it forwards and it gets the momentum on its own, as designed

Them: Exactly. We don't make any decisions, the team takes care of this. We just manage the promotion services for the teams. If someone wants to make us an offer, they do it with us, we think how much we should pay for it. We look at the price rates of the biggest commercial companies in Poland. Our algorithm just checks if it's profitable, and that is where my work ends. It is being brought to a state where I don't have to do anything aside from managing the digital system.

Me: Thank you, you actually answered all the other questions. And if you could describe your general approach to this, do you focus on the goal and we have to reach it, or do you try to fix some errors with the insubordination.

Them: **I always make 3 attempts. I write down that I tried once to do this and this, but I failed. This is the only team in which I actually failed to win someone over, to convince them to work together, this is the first time. After the third attempt, I leave it be, because I don't have time and have other things to do.** As you said, I just move to realise the goal and I don't look...because in the private sector I can just fire them, but here it is not so simple. Not to waste resources on fighting, I tell my mind that “this

man has potential and he will do my tasks, just without this relation". So I just move on to the goals as I planned, and of course not everything will be met because in such a situation like this...when I got a position of a project manager, this function is only to realise the goal. Nothing else.

Me: And what were the reactions of other people in face of such changes?

Them: I let it be. And I maintain a level of culture. After one situation, people said that I acted too "cultural". I believe I was not, I believe I acted the way I should. I do not consider it to be a failure, but I cannot get down to a certain level. I do not see it as a failure. I have my tasks to do and I cannot waste energy on things I cannot change. Forgive me for not saying it all, but I cannot say all specifics (...) in certain situations, I would like things to be different, but I fulfilled a predetermined agenda. I am not going to fight to do something about it. Here I have tasks to do.

Me: And last question for that, during this implementation you meet this resistance, and this is a recurring case. So what kind of consequences do you see for your organisation?

Them: This is an interesting question, thank you. In the end the consequences always land with the team. Personally, I do not give the consequences, but when things slow down and the team cannot work, then I try to empower the premade team, to make them see the weak link in their own ranks. The consequences are the responsibilities of the 3 managers, and they have to deal with the people who cause the issues. One of my biggest projects, I did before when I was the president of education in Kielce during the pandemics. I was also managing the computer networks. I was happy because I thought I would implement the system for the entire Kielce (...) I saw Microsoft having an offer for a Teams system for schools. The first offer I got from them was for 800 000. And it was a lot for the city, especially that we had some financial issues (...) In Kielce there are 2 schools for teachers. I took 2 people from both and sent them to train at Microsoft. When they came back, in each school, I sent 2 people to each and we trained them in what the originals were trained at. Then we implemented the systems, teachers, students, and parents, accounts on Microsoft Teams, the pandemics started in May and in the second week of September we were already ready with in, and in October they announced online education. We fired it up and everything worked out. Then Microsoft reached out to me and wanted to sign a contract for 6 prestige schools, where they will do the entire system for Kielce for free, as they haven't seen anything like this before. This is one of my biggest projects. This wasn't easy and I was in conflict with the teachers, as they did not want to go to work. They did not want to go to work, as they were afraid something would happen (...) I talked with the curator and together we decided that the teachers will have to come to school, they will get computers, they will have heating and electricity, so they cannot discuss. That sparked the conflict with the teachers, as they thought they would stay at home and still get bonuses. This was a little conflict with 3500 people.

Me: Thank you, I think for this amount of material I would be able to write the thesis. Can we move to the second scenario?

Them: Holy Mary, that was the first one? I don't know if you can use all of them.

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Me: Definitely I can, maybe I can tell you, there are 4 models of behaviours, and based on them I try to use them to work out concrete models of responses. And when you talked I was already coding in my head that this is an example of that, etc. So thank you. So maybe let's move to the second one and do the third one another time, maybe. So in the second scenario, as an executive, you support an

initiative in line with campaign promises. However, the initiative faces internal resistance, especially from bureaucrats who express strong ethical objections to certain aspects of the proposed policy. They believe the policy contradicts their personal values and principles. Despite their strong support for the initiative, they refuse to fully implement aspects they consider ethically controversial. They argue that their role as public servants requires adherence to a higher ethical standard, even if that means resisting certain policy directives. Because of ethical concerns, bureaucrats selectively implement the directive, leaving out elements they consider controversial. They may also voice their objections in internal meetings, highlighting the ethical challenges they see in proposed projects. How would you behave in face of such resistance?

Them: It depends who the author is. Is it a promotion campaign?

Me: It is written for, for example, for regional promotion for Kielce, but you may interpret it as you wish. It can be implemented for the region or city, or something smaller.

Them: It is important who is the author of the idea. If I get it from the Ministry or I am the author...these are important differences.

Me: And in case you got the idea from the ministry?

Them: First I need to think, because I work with smart people. With such ideas I always contact other directors, for marketing, for tourism...now I am talking strictly about my position. If the campaign is indeed controversial and there are valid arguments, then I need to address it to the ministry. I cannot just leave it when they say no, I will go back to my minister and tell them that this would not work. Even more, sometimes I am met with a very emotional reaction. Because they are aware I may refuse to do it if I deem it not safe. I can give you an example - we have pandemics, and I could easily use headlines to say that "we infect children", but I add "with tourism" in smaller letters. I would make a great career, but I am not allowed to do this (...) I need to be ready for unethical situations, so I don't buy something I shouldn't. I always think of radical situations.

Me: To be ready for emergencies?

Them: I have to be certain. When one of my directors says "danger is here and here and we better not do it this way, as this slogan can cause problems". If we were to write something on a flag of Ukraine, I would go to the directors and say 'listen, someone could be offended. My team said that we have to do it differently'. This is a real, but extreme example in a situation where we had to publish something on the Ukrainian flag and the letters were on the flag, not beside it.

Me: And in the reverse situation, when the idea comes from you? And there are ethical objections, maybe not even accurate? Maybe something about religious offence or when it is a very simple matter?

Them: It depends on the amount of people. I am not the smartest man in the world. If one person raises concerns and others agree, then we have to realise it. This is democracy. My voice is stronger, but it's not about strength. We have to work out a compromise.

Me: You are the first who said that we have to compromise.



Them: I always do it. [When we have to implement any changes, I always ask them if this is a good idea.](#)

Me: And if I would have to ask about your decisions in face of insubordination caused by ethical concerns, you said dialogue? You try to work out a consensus, but are there any other decisions?

Them: [I am not able to back away if someone is indeed right, but this can only be achieved by dialogue.](#) It's hard to have a dialogue with a group where there is a link via a manager, or there is no good relation. There I need to think what to do, as with the rest of the team, they are often composed of many departments. My team is not just one department, as the teams are interlinked. I say: dialogue, dialogue, dialogue. There is no point in having a stance just because I want to. I haven't done it like this yet.

Me: Have you considered an investment in people? To educate them via events, or you don't have time? Would you try to invest in their knowledge so potentially they can agree to your stance or at least expand their point of view?

Them: I do it very often. [If I want a change and I see there is a need to educate...](#) I can give you an example. When it comes to municipal governance, I feel better in local governments than where I currently am, when I entered the city government I saw that schools did not implement the EU projects. I come back to the example of schools, because this is a big group of people. And there were little EU projects done, maybe 2 a year, where you have 5000 people and 90 units, and only 2 projects are done? It is ridiculous. I referred to the regional government with a request to rally school directors of the highest school. We have 90 directors and the vice director, that's a big group of people. I trained them, I gave them contacts to the regional government who I and the governor designated to help them. And after a while I just didn't want to hear "I do not know" from them. I signed 9 contracts in a week (...) This started going smoothly, which answers your question: I cannot make demands just because I am smarter than them or something, if they do not understand. If I want something from you, then I have to know that you have sufficient resources to do so. And vice versa, if I gave you the knowledge, then I will be surprised that you are not using it, because I paid for them as your manager.

Me: So you give the tools and you expect them to be used.

Them: Yes. And if they aren't used, then I just move away from these people a little further.

Me: Alright. And in case of implementation of such projects and you meet such insubordination, how would you balance the need to implement it and reach the goal, but also not to disregard the ethical concerns to the side. How do you balance those needs, are you prioritising, or you try to manage both sides at the same time.

Them: This is an interesting question. I never really wondered how I would do it, if I wouldn't get this question then I wouldn't think about it. It's not that I prioritise or disregard, but certainly if I have in my team a group...if I have one person that shows these ethical problems. And now the questions - because this can cause different things. Is this person strong enough to rally other people or is this person just sad in the corner because I didn't listen to them. Because you see, the consequences can be very different. Because if the entire team is rising, then I have to react differently than if there is one person that is just unhappy with the world.

Me: And what kind of differences would be in your behaviour in these cases?

Them: I am task oriented and if there is just one person, I just disconnect this person from the team. And that's it, immediately I give other tasks without telling them that they are being excluded. I just bury them in tasks where they don't have time to think about silly things. I carry on with my project (...) If I see I'm losing a team because of this ethical situation, that wasn't even a big deal, but now because of this one person the problem is growing. Then I have a big problem and sometimes I have to change the project management. You have to know me as an executive, I am not doing the project. I need to find a motor that will pull it through. What is the difference between leader and manager? I call myself a leader, this is what I teach. What is the difference - the manager is to fulfil the task, they get a task and they have to stick to it. I am to blow up his tasks, as without this there is no movement forward, it would be a scheme. Scheme is good, but the project has to be managed on a level where I do not have to interfere. Only to evaluate. After a year of implementation, I have to check if all was planned well and we do have certain points to correct, but if I, as a leader, feel good, then I destroy the project frames. To make it creative and let it develop, I have to destroy it. Otherwise the project may not be realised and it has to be changed.

Me: So independence, development, a bit of chaos, these are your values in face of ethical objections, so you don't approach these matters in very rigid frames.

Them: Yes. Sometimes it's better to do something new, not to touch certain sensitive matters. If you can do something nice, compared to wasting your energy on explaining that there are no real ethical concerns, then do the first. This is my approach, maybe bad.

Me: If it works, it cannot be bad (...) Can you bring an example of a similar situation and how was it solved?

Them: We are talking about ethical considerations?

Me: Yes,

Them: Best example would be the Ukrainian flag, when it was solved very quickly. Because of the first meeting, when I got this logo for Ukraine...the arguments got to me very quickly. I wouldn't be happy if someone wrote on my flag. I had to return with the issue and it was solved. But anything harder...I can't really recall for me to have a problem. Of course the teachers went on a strike, but this is a more complicated matter. Imagine teachers who were set off by one person who is not true, these teachers (...) Suddenly the teachers just sit at school, there is no remedy in sight, and they have to deal with the situation and just get back to work (...) I knew the strike will happen, so I had to go through the finals with just half the teachers. I don't want to say what I did, but it went very well without any issue. The teachers were certain I would get beaten, the whole Poland suffered and in Kielce it went just fine. But that was a very refined approach.

Me: I will not ask specifics, but last question to ethics - in case of such insubordination, what potential consequences do you see for the organisation? And institution

Them: I don't think I understand.

Me: Let's say an ethical problem keeps resurfacing in consecutive projects.

Them: But you talk about things I cannot draw conclusions from. That would have to be ridiculous to happen twice and still be a problem.

Me: Let's take an example, when there are roadworks, there was a lot of resistance from cutting certain trees because XYZ. Those responsible for the project say that they will not do it because they care about those trees, and they refuse to carry it out.

Them: For me this is the wrong order of things. **If I know there is going to be a problem, then I should approach it differently.** I think I have an example for such a situation, when it was difficult due to a journalist finding reasons that I will be getting rid of janitors. This is a similar situation, just not about trees, but also very serious. Imagine I have 100 janitors in Kielce's schools. What can I lose in a school, an old computer? What can get stolen. I started building a system of surveillance on schools and security. **I didn't want to fire anyone and it is very hard to fire anyone in the public sector. But their sector has high demand, so all janitors were proposed to work as a conservator in the private sector. If someone was retiring, leaving work, got sick, or a different situation, then I was proposing a change of profession to a conservator.** The situation was hard, because not even one wanted such a change, because of the schedule change of night and day shifts. A serious conflict started, the entire work was collapsing on me, and I did not want to fire anyone (...) And this is an example why you have performed with the team earlier, but there is no perfect solution in any case. If I ask the society if they need a road, they will say yes. If I ask if I'm to cut the trees down, they will say no. Where is the good solution?

Me: There isn't, it's an impasse.

Them: I will tell you another situation, about Korona Kielce. Some politicians were saying that we should finance it. If I would make a referendum in Kielce, ask people if we should finance Korona Kielce, 60000 of them will say no. 70000 will partake in the referendum, but when I want to do it, 1000 people will come with axes to the municipalities to the government building, and those 60000 will not come to defend me. Now I am talking from the position of the president, because I have a right to put such questions out there. Mathematically speaking, I am convinced that 60000 will vote against financing professional clubs, but when it comes to the deed, the extremist part of society that supports Korona will come to me with axes.

Me: Thank you, there is the last scenario, would you like to break it apart or...

Them: Let's do it straight away

(...)

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Me: In this scenario the institution has received a directive from higher authorities to introduce a new management model. The change is seen as necessary to align the institution with broader organisational goals and practices. While initiating the implementation, you encounter resistance from factions among the bureaucratic staff. This resistance stems not only from a natural discomfort with change, but is deeply rooted in the existing organisational culture that the team is determined to maintain. It expresses concern that the proposed changes may jeopardise the efficiency of certain processes and alter the established way of operating that they believe contributes to the success of the

institution. The manifestation of this resistance is evident in their reluctance to adopt the new model, and some employees may even actively oppose or delay the implementation process. This poses a significant challenge as you seek to strike a balance between adherence to the directives of higher authorities regarding organisational change and respect for the values ingrained in the current organisational culture. What would your reactions and thoughts be?

Them: I would not let something like this happen. I would not say “we are going to change everything, from 3 departments I will do 4”. Therefore I would do one simple thing - I say we make a new Department I hire people. I take one of the directors, I make him the author of the project...but I could also put some extra money and just add extra functions. I tell them that I have another task from way up, to make a new Department. How can I make this, I have only so much money, because this is how it works in the public sector - I need to fit in the quotas. If I swing by and say “have extra money, we make a new Department”, then this will fail. I need to give them a choice. Usually we just hire additional personnel. There may of course be a situation, where people are overloaded, because it happens very often, for example building the new Department where we had to hire a portion of people, but others simply got a new task. But you don’t do it this way like you said, I could not just say “you have a new task, new burdens on this and this”.

Me: So in such situations, in face of big change that affects everything, you try to distribute little tasks to individual units and bring incremental changes, rather than the entire system

Them: Precisely that. If I were to make a new system from the ground, it would be very constant and basically impossible. If the change is really big and I know I don’t have enough people to build a new Department, I need to approach it by building this in a clear way among existing people, and later on I call on the directors to monitor it and I ask them how they see it.

Me: Thank you. I think we can skip some questions, you already talked about values. And when you encountered such a situation, when there was a great shift, how did it develop?

Them: Just like I said, this way. We built that Department that is concerned with sport in this way, where we had to take some people in the organisation and hire them additionally for it. That’s how we built it, based on this example.

Me: Alright, thank you.

Them: The most important thing is balanced development.

Me: Thank you. This what you told me basically answered or eliminates all the other questions, this is good because this is what I was missing. I have an hour of recording, so thank you and like I said, I would be able to use even a part of it (...)

(...)

**Transcript (WD)**

(...)

Me: (...) So let's start with the first scenario. You are responsible for implementing a new initiative to improve public services. This involves a significant reallocation of resources and restructuring of departments in your jurisdiction. During the introduction, you have encountered unexpected resistance from a group of mid-level bureaucrats. These staff express concerns about potential changes to their roles, reporting structures and power dynamics within the organisation. They have links with other departments and use internal networks to lobby against proposed changes. Despite clear directives from the relevant office, bureaucrats subtly slow down the implementation process, use their own connections to gain support for their cause within the organisation, and strategically use internal politics to resist change. And I would first like to ask you about your reactions and thoughts when faced with such a situation.

Them: Yes, first you have to focus on the assumptions of such a situation. **Because the problem is quite serious due to the fact that such changes have to be implemented quite often on a small scale, and if certain human elements in the institution do not work together or are missing somewhere, the whole mechanism cannot work as it should.** And of course resistance to change is natural (...) but they are a natural part of the processes. Because, as you probably know, **there are certain norms and laws within which we work and perform our duties.** **But that doesn't mean that there's a production line here and everything runs the same for the whole of one period or term. It's such a delicate balance between keeping within those legal rules, we can call it that, and at the same time being open enough that such changes are actually made as a simplification of certain processes.** Sometimes it affects only one group, and in such cases I try to talk to them, maybe not directly because unfortunately it is not always possible, but I try to reach them through their superiors and convince them of the changes. It is pointless to create an unpleasant situation, but unfortunately sometimes certain things have to be forced through. **It is like a network that is connected in different places. And vibrations pass through it so that the spider knows what is going on. And if certain elements are not connected, that is, they don't fulfil their function, it leads to vibrations coming from a completely different direction, if I can put it that way. So it is ineffective.**

Me: So you are saying that it is your responsibility to make sure that the networks are properly connected?

Them: Yes it is, but I also cannot ignore everything myself, that is, I have my smaller spiders which I send out to fix the network. That is, such changes are introduced gradually through indirect communication between the supervisor and, as you say, the bureaucrat. **And this is not incompatible with the fact that it has to be done, because unfortunately it is not the case that we always have room for discussion. Sometimes, as I said, these things have to be pushed through, but not with fire and sword, but with the human factor.**

Me: So the fact that these changes have to be made, and indeed the fact that there is so much resistance from employees or bureaucrats in particular, doesn't preclude that on the one hand you have to be tough and say "this and that has to be done this and that", but at the same time, as you say, approach it humanely through such networks with smaller managers, shall we say?

Them: Exactly so

Me: I understand. So your reaction is that you need to deal with things through intermediaries, but let's call it a firm hand. Is this effective and are you taking any more action?

Them: Honestly, I have yet to encounter a situation that has not been resolved in this way. I mean, **there are different degrees of success, but delegating in this way has always brought the best results.**

Me: And have you taken any other directions in dealing with insubordination?

Them: It depends on the position, because with a change of position, the environment and this network, let's call it, is subject to change. Back when I was a councillor, this network was small enough that when I encountered any objections, they were close enough, let's say, to me, that I was able to talk to them directly and try to convince them. Because it's like in small companies that you can call someone on the carpet to the director or talk to the PR people. But in public institutions, as this is of interest to you, it does not follow the same course. And really, the situation would have to be tragic for me to have to go to a specific person myself, to such a middle-level bureaucrat and talk to him. Because you also have to remember that, **despite my position, there are norms I have to follow,** it's not my backyard where I can make the changes I want. So most of the time **when these situations happen, it's just dealt with through the network, that is, we come across a problem in a certain group or a certain person, and we deal with that problem** so and so, and **I appoint you and you to deal with it.**

Me: Thank you, a very interesting approach, and one I have just encountered before in another conversation. Is this just because of the guidelines in the institutions or is this approach just let's call it logical?

Them: On the one hand these are the guidelines we have, as I said, even though I'm where I am, **I can't do what I want and I have to stick to certain guidelines.** But on the other hand I can slightly bend these norms and sometimes it happens that I have to intervene in something personally. With this, let's say, base approach, **it's actually logical to get things done by directors and others.** So it's kind of a mix, let's call it.

Me: I see, so to sum it up, we focus on our own intervention in the problem, we set the goal and let's say the result that has to be achieved, but we push it not directly but through subordinates creating such a network.

Them: Yes, sir.

Me: And can you tell me of any drastic scenario that you would undertake in the face of insubordination?

Them: Such a drastic scenario is what I understand when the network fails, yes? Because in that case, **the only thing left for me is to exclude such a person or even persons from the project. So much, because sometimes it is not possible to spend more time dealing with such cases. If it's more than one person, you really need to think before you put the whole team out of work. Then you really need to sit down and talk things through, gradually trying to convince them that "maybe we'll just change this, leave this to you, but then we'll do this and this". Because if the problem is really serious, and not just that "we like it the way it is", then it is necessary to sit down and talk it through.** But unfortunately, such a wishful thinking is not a sufficient reason to change everything.

Me: And in cases like this, where a project needs to be implemented, how do you reconcile the need to deliver the project with the need to, say, put out an internal fire?

Them: I mean **as a rule the project takes precedence**. There is no discussion here. That's actually a good statement, sometimes there is simply NO discussion. I don't like some of the projects, but I have to do them and convince others to do them. One, that they are needed on a larger scale, because we are providing a public service and not my personal service, and two, that this is the programme. And I would very much like to change this programme to my vision, but unfortunately I cannot. So this kind of balancing act, we can play at it and reconcile it as much as possible, but the scales will always be on the side of the project. No matter how close, but it will always prevail there.

Me: And can you recall a similar situation, how it was resolved, or if it was resolved, and what people's reactions were?

Them: Well it's like I was saying for example about just these small changes, they are quite frequent and sometimes one two or even five people will say "and I don't like it and I'm not going to do it". This introduces a certain disturbance which is natural, but at the same time has to be solved quickly. And an example of such a thing is, so quickly off the top of my head I will tell you, the changes in the process of introducing the project, that it was decided that the project would not be introduced in the order ABC, but ACB. And **such a decision was made because, let's say, element C, i.e. the team, showed greater possibilities in the project and we made a decision to move it to the second level where the work was the greatest**. And immediately everything started to go more smoothly, but there were objections that the work was left in half, that it was difficult to switch, and so on. And it was not so much that suddenly the whole chain fell apart, but for several weeks there were delays and these objections that when the project was given, it was not my responsibility. And unfortunately it just had to be resolved by forcing it so much that we're sorry, but it's a whole network and all the threads have to work together. And if suddenly the team says no, then the system is not working as it should and projects are delayed.

Me: So we're pushing again, we can't waste time on debates, right?

Them: We can try to have discussions and that sometimes gets results. But let's say after one or two conversations, if we don't have a change for the better or we don't reach an agreement, sometimes you have to put this one upright and the other one to the hangman's noose, because it's not their place, or even my place, for such things.

Me: And a final question to this scenario, what do you see as the potential consequences for the institution in the face of such incidents?

Them: If they are not dealt with properly and reasonably quickly, well delays, delays and delays. You also have to remember that we are supporting a bigger system here than, say, a building, so if we don't deliver a project because someone doesn't like it, then generally our public opinion and our face and all respect for the institution goes down the drain.

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Me: I see, thank you. So let's now move on to the second scenario about ethics, shall we? As a manager, you support an initiative in line with your campaign promises. However, the initiative faces internal resistance, especially from bureaucrats who express strong ethical objections to certain aspects of the proposed policy. They believe that the policy goes against their personal values and principles. Despite their strong support for the initiative, they refuse to fully implement aspects they

consider ethically controversial. They argue that their role as a public service requires them to adhere to a higher ethical standard, even if this means resisting certain policy directives. Because of ethical concerns, bureaucrats selectively implement the directive, omitting elements they consider controversial. They may also voice their objections in internal meetings, highlighting the ethical challenges they see in the proposed projects. And a very similar question, i.e. your thoughts, models of action, etc.

Them: You know what, ethics is a very difficult topic. Because, as I said earlier, it's not like we can indulge in this kind of talk about what we like or don't like. **And it is as I said that sometimes there is no room for such objections, because the project has priority. But if there is such a situation, the objections must be serious, not that I do not like that we do not ask about these, about pronouns, that someone is they/them and I am he/she. I'm sorry to give you this example, but it would be quite extreme if we suddenly had to make changes or make drastic compromises to the whole project because someone didn't like their pronouns not being there.** And here I can immediately give an example, because a few years ago there was a **compulsory training about just such cases, how to behave.** And all of a sudden there were two sides of the argument: on the one hand very conservative people didn't want to follow it, and on the other hand very liberal people said that it was wrong and that it was not ethical to show such material. **And what to do in such a case is sometimes to wait it out. Because we have a job to do here and we cannot stop for such reasons.** Because these are very individual reasons, and for them it's actually a big deal, I don't deny that, but unfortunately it's not the centre of our world.

Me: Okay, and while we're on the subject of examples, has there been any situation where these ethical objections have been caused by institutional initiatives?

Them: You know what, there certainly have been. I cannot recall exactly such a situation, because these are very individual issues, but, for example, someone does not agree with our actions because we are currently trying to introduce EU directives that do not always correspond. **And sometimes it is not really in line with our values, but unfortunately force majeure. This is not the place for such cases, unless these ethical issues actually endanger someone's life or values, which are indispensable.** But if these are not such cases, then the approach is the same, you have to sit down, wipe away the tears and keep working. Because if we all wanted to do everything according to our values, we would unfortunately get bitten here after a while.

Me: I see, so most of the time we regret to say that unfortunately this is not a problem that we consider to be serious in this society, and we leave such individual issues to the back of our minds.

Them: Yes. Maybe it sounds a bit drastic, but like I said there are probably priorities, and our **behaviour in the institution is not just subject to our values and beliefs, but there are rules that we have to follow. As I said, our behaviour, and indeed our approach to such phenomena, is very much dependent on rules.**

Me: And if you had to put in a few sentences your decisions and behaviour, such a model of behaviour, how would you describe it?

Them: In the face of such ethical issues? Well, I think that here, unfortunately, you have to take such a hard approach, although I would very much like to make connections and just maintain relationships,



unfortunately this is not possible. Maybe I can talk to my closest colleagues, try to communicate, but unfortunately I don't have the time or energy to talk to everyone. There is also an element of principle here, that I am not obliged to talk to them. This is the problem, because you are asking me for an approach and strategy if such a thing happens, and I do not have to do anything. Although I want to, I do not have to. So the easiest thing to do is just to push through, change the team dynamics, delegate, do whatever it takes to move the project forward. **Such objections are unfortunately sidelined, especially as we have guidelines on our ethics.** **And our morals or beliefs, if they don't really concern something important which has been overlooked, can unfortunately be written on the internet or we can sit back and do nothing.**

Me: So to sum up, our ethical approach, our morals and so on, we leave them at home and we can talk there if we don't like it?

Them: Well basically yes, of course this is not some kind of dictatorship and we raise our objections and we will try to resolve them, but they actually have to be important. **If they are and it is indeed a threat, that is why we have a voice to acknowledge it. And in such cases we try to make contacts, to delegate things to other people who will deal with it. Let's say we look for such intermediaries, because we don't have a confidences room here, but if there are such objections, we delegate them to outsiders, it is checked, filtered, and then it comes to us.**

Me: So the way to deal with this kind of resistance is to generally say "then write down here what's not OK, it will be considered by someone else, and we'll investigate it then, but in the meantime you need to push forward", yes?

Them: Well, that's the way it is.

Me: I understand. So you immediately spoke about values and provided examples, so I guess we'll move on to the last question about the consequences you foresee for the institution in the face of continuous ethical objections.

Them: Well, if such objections arise, either something is wrong with the institution or something is wrong with the people. For example, not from my field, but during those court upheavals years ago, there were numerous objections. And in such cases, when everyone says, "Wait, this threatens democracy, the separation of powers, it's not in line with the constitution," then it shouldn't be allowed to proceed. Those are cases **when you need to stop and see that the institution, meaning people, are saying "no," which signifies a problem. It's an institutional problem. On the other hand, if we have individual reasons, pronouns, or other things, I apologize again for this example, but that's the problem with people.** Regardless of which side it comes from, whether the idea is bad or people disagree, the consequences are generally a failure of the project or even the institution. If suddenly everyone said that the Disciplinary Chamber is some absurdity and they're not going to work, sitting at their desks and doing nothing, it wouldn't pass.

Me: I understand, so ethical objections can indeed have an effect, and in that case, they cannot be dealt with?

Them: I mean, every objection can have an effect. It's not about whether it's about ethics or something else; if there are enough of them, there's nothing to be done. We can push as much as we want, we can

change teams, but in the end, if 100% are against it, we have exactly 0% to fight with that. But this is a situation that generally seems to occur only during revolutions.

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Me: Very interesting observation; I need to mark that down for later. And now, let's move on to the last scenario. In the institution, a directive from higher authorities has been issued to implement a new management model. This change is perceived as necessary to align the institution with broader goals and organizational practices. During the initiation of the implementation, you encounter resistance from factions among the bureaucratic staff. This resistance arises not only from the natural discomfort associated with change but is deeply rooted in the existing organizational culture that the team is determined to maintain. They express concerns that the proposed changes may jeopardize the efficiency of certain processes and alter the established way of functioning, which they believe contributes to the institution's success. The manifestation of this resistance is visible in their reluctance to adopt the new model, and some employees may even actively oppose or delay the implementation process. It poses a significant challenge as you strive to find a balance between adhering to directives from higher authorities regarding organizational changes and respecting the values entrenched in the current organizational culture. How would you handle this, your thoughts, behaviors, and so on?

Them: Well, here we are dealing with a directive from a higher level, so to speak. Often, nobody has a say in such cases. But if we take something like this into account, **I think that in the vast majority of cases, I would stand on the side of the institution, even though I might not like it sometimes.** For example, such EU directives, some standards that completely change our way of working, are changes that even I would oppose if it actually threatens efficiency and changes, as you called it, the organizational culture. Because changes in that culture or the way we operate... we can't suddenly change how our body works, right? Such changes can be introduced gradually, like a surgery where we shorten the intestine or perform a transplant. But traumatic changes in our system will simply end in death, **so objections in this case are justified because the consequences are precisely the collapse of the institution in the form it exists.**

Me: So, do you see any possibility of resisting non-subordination?

Them: Well, there's always a possibility. But it's a case, as I told you, like changing that ABC. But here we're changing ABC, DEF, and the whole alphabet, and before someone figures out what's going on, all the letters will fall apart. I apologize, but I can't really imagine opposing something like that. Because if it were really necessary, a complete overhaul of the work model, resistance would be impossible. And in such a situation, it's either piece by piece, letter by letter, or we take the risk and push through the whole thing. But that's a risk for the institution and also for me. Because imagine a situation, whether it will be in the news that the Ministry of this and that collapsed, or due to the Minister or director, it came to such a situation. So it's a very delicate matter, and the number of maneuvers I would have to make... there is no specific strategy for that.

Me: So, I understand that here we are improvising to some extent, introducing small changes not to disrupt the existing culture at once, and if there is indeed an element deeply rooted, the only solution is to push it through, with a significant risk for yourself, right?

Them: That's right. I really try to imagine how I would handle it, but the situation is so colossal, we're talking about changes comparable to the destruction or creation of another institution. And then it goes as I mentioned about the Disciplinary Chamber.

Me: I understand. I won't bother you further on this, as this is indeed an extreme example, and I think from the frameworks presented in scientific literature, this is reserved for the emergence or destruction of an existing order. And a small conclusion to this, it seems that you don't see the possibility of resisting such developments in these cases?

Them: I mean, I can resist, always. I can try to convince them myself, distribute duties and directives, but the only thing I could possibly do is make changes gradually, with the help of other people. But then I'm not solely responsible for it; it's my network and external individuals. And that would be a very long and challenging process. So the only solution to this is, as I said, possibly negotiations and small changes bit by bit.

Me: Okay, I understand. I might stop recording now because the amount of material you've given me is great, and there are many things I can use. So thank you (...)

## Transcript (NK)

(...)

Me: So, let's start with the first scenario concerning smaller changes stemming from you, namely, you are responsible for implementing a new initiative aimed at improving public services. This involves a significant reallocation of resources and the restructuring of departments in a given jurisdiction. During the implementation, unexpected resistance is encountered from a group of mid-level bureaucrats. These employees express concerns about potential changes in their roles, reporting structures, and power dynamics within the organization. They have connections with other departments and use internal networks to lobby against the proposed changes. Despite clear directives from the relevant office, bureaucrats subtly slow down the implementation process, leveraging their own connections to garner support for their cause within the organization. They strategically use internal politics to resist changes. The first question is about your reactions, initial thoughts, and actions taken.

Them: Such events are quite common; I might not call it insubordination, although, as I understand, it is a broad concept. So, in such cases, I find it crucial to identify the source of the problem. And here, I'm talking not only about the person or people who are not comfortable with these changes because, of course, when we change the mode of operation, even in small degrees, not everyone will necessarily want to execute them. But going back to it, I always try to see where these individuals see the problem. And then, either personally, due to authority, or through intermediaries, I try to reach them.

Me: And once you reach them, what are the further actions when this problem persists?

Them: (...) we try to find a solution. Perhaps this is a very individual approach, and here we can afford it to indeed have such contact with mid-level bureaucrats, as you mentioned. And even if such a possibility is not there for me to directly intervene in such incidents, we regularly have training

programs and various events aimed at building trust or bonds. And then, when such changes occur, there is always the perspective in the back of the mind that "this is our mission, and we may reach the goal in various ways, but the goal remains unchanged."

Me: So, your strategy is preventive actions, building such bonds beforehand through training. They act as a framework for employees so that, regardless of the direction it takes, we know that the goal and mission of our institution remain unchanged. And this gives a sense of loyalty or belonging?

Them: Yes, exactly.

Me: Do you make any other decisions, for example, when such frameworks fail?

Them: In the case when all of that fails, and you have to approach it a bit more sternly, such matters are delegated to other individuals, to team leaders. So, let's say the responsibility for the functioning of the institution rests on me, but the responsibility for the functioning of the team rests on the leaders or chairpersons.

Me: I understand, so you emphasize communication and sharing responsibilities?

Them: Yes.

Me: And can you recall a similar situation, how did it turn out?

Them: We opted for small exchanges based on volunteering, where we introduced such a program, and if someone wanted to switch to another department for a while, we looked for suitable substitutes and facilitated the exchange.

Me: So, you placed a lot of emphasis on creating such networks, so the idea of an exchange was ultimately their idea, not something imposed from above?

Them: Yes, exactly.

Me: In the case of recurring situations like these, what consequences do you foresee for the institution?

Them: Well, in such cases, the consequence would be delays and the inability to work. But then it is a signal that our mechanisms are not working as they should. Because such incidents, as you mentioned, of insubordination, whether large or small, if they repeat and it's not just coming from one person, it indicates that the problem lies within the institution. At least, that's how I see it.

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Me: Thank you. Alright, let's move on to the second scenario about ethics. In this case, as a manager, you support an initiative consistent with campaign promises. However, this initiative faces internal resistance, especially from bureaucrats who express strong ethical reservations about certain aspects of the proposed policy. They believe that this policy is inconsistent with their personal values and principles. Despite strong support for the initiative, they refuse full implementation of aspects they consider ethically controversial. They argue that their role as public servants requires adherence to a

higher ethical standard, even if it means resisting certain political directives. Due to ethical concerns, bureaucrats selectively implement the directive, omitting elements they find controversial. They may also express their objections in internal meetings, emphasizing the ethical challenges they see in the proposed projects. And a similar question, how would you behave in such a case, what actions, strategies, and thoughts?

Them: I can cite the same example about these exchanges. I may exaggerate, but **if our plan involves such "breaking up of families" within teams and departments, then such objections are entirely understandable. Because everyone has a system of values and knows what is right and wrong. Indeed, there are guidelines in place here that mandate certain behaviors to maintain dignity and professionalism, but that does not change the fact that if something is genuinely wrong, we have an obligation to speak up. Maybe it's in the nature of our institution, but especially in the case of such ethical objections, it requires special attention from me and others.** Because most people join here with a sense of mission, right? And if that mission is threatened, more or less, everyone feels that it's heading in the wrong direction. So, I would say that it is even very good behavior, taking a break to say, "something is wrong here, and it's a problem," and then we need to sit down and resolve it.

Me: And in the case when these are indeed very personal values that go beyond what the institution assumes?

Them: What exactly do you mean?

Me: For example, if these objections stem from highly personalized views, and someone refuses to cooperate because, even though the program being introduced aligns with the institution's mission and the campaign, they refuse for ideological reasons, beliefs, or even religious motives?

Them: I understand (...) in such cases (...) I would say we need to take a slightly different approach. Because, as I understand it, there is no possibility of convincing or having a conversation with these individuals? Because if so, and those possibilities have been exhausted, unfortunately, **there is no other option but to exclude these individuals from the projects. I'm talking about assigning other duties or temporary relocation.** Because I really want these issues to be resolved, but we have our work ethos that can only be bent to a certain extent. And unfortunately, in case of crossing that limit, we have to apply such methods so that it does not pose a threat to the institution.

Me: So, it's a gradual approach, where we try to talk, but if someone is very stubborn in their beliefs and there is no quick resolution, then we have to take such drastic steps.

Them: Yes, unfortunately, that's how it is.

Me: How do you balance the need to implement the project and at the same time address such objections? When, let's say, the moment comes when we have to exclude these people, and we no longer try to save them?

Them: (...) we try to push both issues at the same time, of course, more slowly because there are difficulties. But after one or two conversations, if these programs actually fail, unfortunately, after several attempts, you have to move forward.

Me: I understand. Do your personal values influence your behavior in such situations?

Them: Well, on the one hand, yes, because I know these people, I know what they do, maybe not all of them, but still. But there are certain limits I cannot cross due to the role I fulfill. So, as much as I can give, I will, but there are limits to which my values have to yield to professionalism.

Me: Okay... I think I won't ask for another example because you've already provided one at the beginning. But may I ask about the reactions of these bureaucrats to both negotiations and compromises, and two, to such drastic removals?

Them: I mean, in both cases, the result is that the matter is resolved. And I haven't encountered a situation where it significantly contributed to a complete halt in activities. In the worst-case scenario, it leads to such removal. And that's it; there might be some grumbling, but even in the case where someone decides to leave, unfortunately, we have to come to terms with it.

Me: I understand, so ultimately, such a loss might turn out for the better, but we still prefer it to be resolved earlier or even in advance.

Them: That's right.

Me: Alright, I won't ask about ethics anymore because it's the most challenging topic, and I'll ask about the last scenario concerning major changes throughout the organization.

Them: Okay.

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Me: So, in this scenario, a directive has been issued by higher authorities in the institution to implement a new management model. This change is seen as necessary to align the institution with broader goals and organizational practices. During the initiation of the implementation, you encounter resistance from a faction within the bureaucratic staff. This resistance stems not only from the natural discomfort associated with change but is deeply rooted in the existing organizational culture that the team is determined to maintain. They express concerns that the proposed changes may jeopardize the efficiency of certain processes and alter the established way of functioning, which they believe contributes to the institution's success. The manifestation of this resistance is evident in their reluctance to accept the new model, and some employees may even actively oppose or delay the implementation process. This poses a significant challenge as you strive to find a balance between adhering to directives from higher authorities regarding organizational changes and respecting the values entrenched in the current organizational culture. How would you handle this, what actions would be taken?

Them: Well, here we are dealing with a complete change in the management approach. And it's often the case that I also have to adapt to it. Because if we take the example of departmental exchanges, the work culture is still preserved. But here, everything is changed, and this resistance or reluctance to these changes... frankly, I'm not sure how it would unfold. Because here, I understand that the changes taking place are guidelines, for example, from the government or even the European Commission, right?

Me: Yes, I think the European Commission is a good example.

Them: So, such changes have taken place, of course, but gradually. Because if there is such a revolution, and practically everyone expresses these objections, unfortunately, there is no optimal strategy for dealing with it. Because in that case, and we can also say this about the previous two scenarios, in the end, the institution is made up of people. And if every person says no, no matter what interventions we make or from which institution these directives come, unfortunately, it won't work for us. And we have no way to prevent it or push it forward. **The only solution here is mediation, dialogue, maybe additional training programs for employees so that they can see that such changes are necessary.** Because, as I mentioned, the title is just a title, but **when we encounter such resistance, unfortunately, we have to sit down, discuss the matter, see what can be done about it, and maybe implement it piece by piece.**

Me: So, we rely again on dialogue, and let's say we see that certain things are beyond us and we won't push them through by force.

Them: Yes.

Me: Okay, so dialogue, dialogue, investment in development, and perspectives?

Them: Yes, investment is a good summary.

Me: What values do you consider crucial in such cases?

Them: Values... well, here we are dealing with maintaining a balance between professionalism, meaning that there is a certain hierarchy, but on the other hand, we know that in the face of such changes and resistance, it doesn't mean anything. **So, on one side, we have professionalism, and on the other, the need for dialogue and the human factor. And even though we would really want to, unfortunately, all regulations and work ethos don't always prevail. And sometimes we have to stop, discuss, and find a way forward that we can all take together. Because we can't exclude everyone and keep moving forward.**

Me: I understand, this is a very interesting approach; I haven't encountered it in other interviews.

Them: Oh, is that not good?

Me: No, on the contrary. It's good to have such a diversified set of approaches. I think you already answered questions about consequences and balancing... I probably don't have much else to ask. Just maybe summarizing the general approach, if there is an opportunity, we should emphasize dialogue, building relationships, either indirectly or directly. But if we encounter a situation that cannot be saved or a compromise cannot be reached, unfortunately, we have to push it forward by removing that element. Could this be a summary?

Them: Yes, very well put.

## **Transcript (WG)**

(...)

Me: I'll just repeat for the recording that the interview is being recorded for transcription purposes and is, of course, anonymous. Let's start with the first scenario about implementing smaller changes. You are responsible for implementing a new initiative aimed at improving public services. This involves a significant reallocation of resources and restructuring of departments in a given jurisdiction. During the implementation, you encounter unexpected resistance from a group of mid-level bureaucrats. These employees express concerns about potential changes in their roles, reporting structures, and power dynamics in the organization. They have connections with other departments and use internal networks to lobby against the proposed changes. Despite clear directives from the relevant office, bureaucrats subtly slow down the implementation process, leveraging their own connections to garner support for their cause within the organization, and strategically using internal politics to resist the changes. The first question, general thoughts, approach, and actions you would take?

Them: We need to start with the fact that changes come from certain assumptions of the management because this issue is crucial here. Here, you need to be aware of the dynamics; there are leaders or superiors, and there are subordinates, the employees. So, there is an obvious hierarchy that we usually adhere to. But this certainly doesn't mean that my behavior or that of other leaders is guided by rules that tie our hands. So, in such situations, I try to look at the guidelines and tell myself, "Okay, within my scope, I have the following options, and I can bend them to this extent."

Me: So, the first step is to look at guidelines, codes, and generally principles? How does this then manifest in actions?

Them: It depends on the problem. Because you're asking me about the non-implementation of certain procedures or guidelines because these changes are not liked. And this can, of course, happen, but most often we try to act in advance, that such changes will be introduced, implemented, but aim for this, this, and this. And even after announcing such changes, if there are still concerns of insubordination, then we switch to another course of action. Because it also depends on the issue. If we can afford actions, I would even say drastic actions, such as excluding such units from the entire process, then we must do it. But these are situations that require quick action. And if the situation allows us to sit down, talk, analyse the problem, with one, two, or six people, then, of course, that's the correct course. But then the order is reversed; we have dialogue first and then exclusion.

Me: So, actions that build relationships and actions based on one's own interference don't exclude each other; they are consistent actions?

Them: If the situation allows for it, yes. If we have the time and patience, and it's indeed a problem that needs to be addressed, sometimes such situations need to be approached from several different angles.

Me: I understand, and from your experience, what approach do you usually take?

Them: Personally, I try to approach it just as I mentioned, from different angles to sort of surround the issue. On one hand, there are guidelines, there's a project that must be implemented. On the other hand, such power struggles make no sense when there's time pressure, so sometimes you can instantly divert these individuals to a side track, ask what doesn't fit, why we disagree, and work out a compromise. This can also be done by a team of leaders, not personally, but ultimately, it boils down to results. So, as I mentioned, we can talk and work on mutual understanding, but at the same time, it



must move forward. And if I don't see that it makes any sense, then these conversations are unfortunately a waste of time, and that's when we enter the realm of drastic actions.

Me: So, we can try to take different directions simultaneously, showing openness to discussions, building relationships, but also saying, "We will talk about it, but it must move forward, and we'll consider changes."

Them: Yes, in a simplified way.

Me: Is this an effective approach, or does it waste too many resources and time?

Them: It depends on individual issues because there's a human element, but there's also a directive or project.

Me: And how do you balance addressing such objections, insubordination, and the need to implement the project?

Them: Usually, **the project always takes priority. As you mentioned, there are changes in the implementation process, and these are short-term changes. It's again an individual matter of balancing the need for such changes and the needs of employees** If the changes indeed concern their work and not necessarily the entire process, we can afford to dismiss it. **Sometimes it's better to withdraw such changes and compromise. But as I mentioned earlier, sometimes you have to adapt to the guidelines.**

Me: In such cases, what values do you consider crucial?

Them: Patience from all sides. And also **an understanding that certain situations cannot be resolved, and you have to set them aside.**

Me: You're talking about excluding certain elements, meaning employees from the process?

Them: Yes, unfortunately.

Me: I understand, sometimes difficult decisions lead to better outcomes. Can you tell me if you've encountered a similar situation, and what were the reactions and solutions?

Them: Well, it depends on the scale because insubordination can last one day or a week. Now it's hard for me to find a specific example, but such actions are not very common but do happen.

Me: Alright, in the face of such situations, what consequences do you foresee for the institution?

Them: **Every process, which is often marked by such incidents, cannot drag on. That's why such changes should be introduced sensibly and smoothly. Otherwise, we're dealing with an inefficient institution.**

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Me: (...) I'll ask about the second scenario involving ethical issues. As a manager, you support an initiative aligned with the promises made during the campaign. However, this initiative faces internal resistance from bureaucrats who express strong ethical reservations about certain aspects of the

proposed policy. They believe that the policy contradicts their personal values and principles. They refuse to fully implement aspects they consider ethically controversial. They argue that their role as public servants requires adhering to a higher ethical standard, even if it means resisting certain directives. Due to ethical concerns, bureaucrats selectively implement the directive, omitting elements they find controversial. They may also voice their objections at internal meetings, emphasising the challenges they see in the proposed projects. And the question remains the same: how would you handle this, what reservations would you have, and what actions would you take?

Them: This is a fairly realistic scenario (...) in education, such ethical statements or reasoning must be approached with caution. However, it is sometimes challenged, especially in the political sphere, and such interventions are common. And you are asking me about reactions, and they are quite strong. Because here we are dealing with ideas that come from within, not from superiors. Unfortunately, I have to provide a somewhat truncated version here, but that's because, especially in education, this is a very nuanced topic, closely tied to the roots that are endemic to our environment. Here we have a situation, let me explain it in a moment. Namely, we try to convey specific content. Our task is to transport this content to other institutions in a format determined by higher authorities, not in any other way. Unfortunately, there are often problems here, but from the outside, because something here is not liked, and something there does not fit. Our task as an institution is to ensure that the established format is delivered. So, such objections or hindrances come from the outside.

Me: And if the content or format is questioned internally?

Them: Such situations are unacceptable. **Unless we are talking about editing, for which functions and individuals are designated to verify that it is indeed in line with the assumptions. In such a case, insubordination is completely justified. I would even say it is desirable because everyone makes mistakes. It is then the responsibility of those individuals.**

Me: So, let's say insubordination is sometimes even desirable.

Them: Yes, definitely. If it aims to genuinely improve what we do and is in line with the goals of the project or institution, it is even required. But it also comes from the labor code, from obligations. Here we can encounter a real need for improvement or mere caprice. We cannot allow that, as it would result in the approved material being completely different from what was submitted.

Me: So, at the same time, we have to rely on the work being done according to the guidelines, but we also expect some degree of individual thinking?

Them: That's correct.

Me: How do you react to changes introduced due to such ethical visions, where, according to my perspective, the content should be different?

Them: Unfortunately, here **there is an obligation to adhere to the guidelines. Even if something doesn't fit, if it goes beyond mere mistakes, we don't have the right to intervene.** Everyone has their ideologies, but for now, we must set them aside and follow the prescribed path. For example, those textbooks, as you probably remember, no matter whether during corrections or editing, we encounter assumptions that we may consider erroneous. **We are obliged to stay within the scope of our function and work according to the guidelines, not our own ideology or ethics.**

Me: I understand, so we are set on a certain track and must follow it, simultaneously looking at errors in the categories assigned to us, not those we define ourselves?

Them: Yes.

Me: Alright, I think I won't ask you for another example here, but I might ask about the need to balance the project and address such objections?

Them: I mean, everything here goes very linearly; errors or objections are reported and pushed forward. Maybe returning to textbooks or educational materials, there is quite a long chain of actions from the author to the editor or reader. And there are always several sets of eyes. **Objections also have to go through this process, and it doesn't matter whether they are caused by an actual error or not. So if a problem arises under the title "I disagree with this," I say, "Alright, then send it further for investigation," and that's it.** Maybe it's very individual here, but that's also because I don't have the right, let's say, to intervene in every mistake. Because then there are too many objections that shouldn't be here.

Me: So you delegate to others; you're only interested in the process as a whole?

Them: Yes. **I, as a superior, don't always intervene personally. Sometimes there are bodies outside the institution for that, separate committees, and I can refer to them, but most often it's someone else's role.**

Me: Okay, so it's automatically pushed forward; there's no need to stop and consider whether we should address the ethical problem first or deal with the project first?

Them: That's how it looks from my side, but it's also **because the system is set up that way from the top.** And I can't interfere with it.

Me: I understand, so there's a certain pattern that is geared towards such difficulties, and they are, let's say, overcome by the system's assumptions.

Them: Yes.

Me: Very interesting. Can I ask about the consequences associated with continuous problems in this area?

Them: The problem might be potential overload. At individual levels or steps, everyone introduces their changes, and in the end, it's incomparable with the assumptions.

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Me: We will now move on to the last scenario involving significant changes. A directive from higher authorities has been issued to the institution to implement a new management model. This change is perceived as necessary for aligning the institution with broader goals and organizational practices. During the initiation of the implementation, you encounter resistance from factions within the bureaucratic staff. This resistance stems not only from the natural discomfort associated with change but is deeply rooted in the existing organizational culture that the team is determined to maintain.

They express concerns that the proposed changes may jeopardize the efficiency of certain processes and alter the established way of functioning, which, in their view, contributes to the institution's success. The manifestation of this resistance is evident in their reluctance to embrace the new model, and some employees may actively oppose or delay the implementation process. This poses a significant challenge when striving to find a balance between adhering to directives from higher authorities regarding organizational changes and respecting the values entrenched in the current organizational culture. And the question is about your reactions, your behavior model, thoughts.

Them: It would be challenging for me to navigate such a situation. Because the assumption is that this whole process we talked about is being changed. And, of course, this can take place during the approval of such changes at the Ministry level, that is, at the national level. **In such a case, we can't really fight against it because such directives are not within our control, and resistance is then understandable.**

Me: How would you handle the communication of such significant changes? If you had to?

Them: Well, when I have no choice, I'm afraid others are in a similar situation. **Then you just have to sit down, state the matter clearly, why it's happening, and what changes will occur.** And when roles or duties are assigned, we try to transition to them. **Because it's really difficult to fight against it, and neither I nor my colleagues have the right tools to do something about it.** Unless we appeal the decision, collectively try to stop these changes. If I had to stop it, **then perhaps only by pushing through these changes.**

Me: So the decisions made would be based on pushing forward? Regardless of the means?

Them: This is quite drastically put, but such a situation would indeed require that. I'm sorry, but I can't imagine behaving differently when facing such logical demands.

Me: I understand. I won't bother you with another example because the situation is quite extreme (...)

Them: No, not really.

Me: Alright (...)