

**Critical Perspectives on International Public Sector Management**  
Volume 1

# Emerging and Potential Trends in Public Management: An Age of Austerity

**John Diamond**  
**Joyce Liddle**  
Editors

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC  
SECTOR MANAGEMENT VOLUME 1

# EMERGING AND POTENTIAL TRENDS IN PUBLIC MANAGEMENT: AN AGE OF AUSTERITY

EDITED BY

**JOHN DIAMOND**

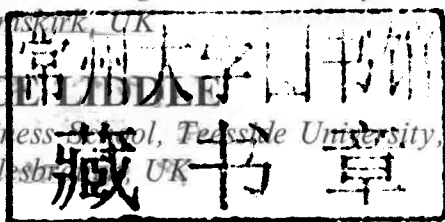
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Emerald Group Publishing Limited  
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2012

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**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-85724-997-5

ISSN: 2045-7944 (Series)



Certificate Number 1985  
ISO 9001  
ISO 14001

ISOQAR certified  
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and Environmental  
standards ISO 9001:2008  
and 14001:2004,  
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Over the past 10 years, we have become acutely aware that books are not just the work of the authors alone. We have, since we started working together, relied upon and been supported by a number of colleagues and friends. In particular, we owe a huge debt of thanks to Carole Brocken (Edge Hill University) who has been so supportive of both of us as well as patient too.

The support we have received from Emerald has enabled us to take an idea through to an annual series and we are very aware of the demands we have placed on both Stephanie Hull and Emma Bruun and are hugely appreciative of their support.

Some of the thinking behind this edited collection was first discussed at a seminar in Birmingham City University in the spring of 2009. We want to say thank you to Veronica Coatham who hosted that day for her support and friendship. The Regeneration Management Research Network (set up in 1999 at Durham University by Joyce and Alan Southern) has offered us a “home” to explore ideas and to reflect upon our practice. We owe all of those who have been involved a massive thank you.

Finally, we would like to thank those who have contributed papers to this first edition. We are really aware of the pressures colleagues are under to meet many different deadlines. The request to join this series came with the invitation to be speculative as well as interesting. We hope that you enjoy what follows.

## INTRODUCTION

The scale and depth of the financial crisis across the advanced economies in Europe and North America have already led to changes in government in Ireland, Iceland, Greece, Italy and the United Kingdom. It may yet lead to further changes in other European states and it has certainly destabilised the European Union. Arguably, it was also a key factor in the election of Barack Obama in 2008. These political crises may appear, at times, to be short-term and parochial to the broader social and economic changes which the collapse of the financial markets in 2007 through to 2008 created. In part, we think that it is important not to become preoccupied by the domestic and internal political disputes which these changes have led to within nation states or between nations, especially within the European Union or those who are part of the Euro Zone. But, we are acutely aware that these economic and political crises have consequences too for the ways in which we think of the relationships between the political institutions of nation states, their functions and their role in social and welfare services and individuals and communities who directly benefit from the public services and agencies which the state supports.

In short, it seemed to us that the economic crises of 2007/2008 were part of a much broader restructuring of public and welfare capitalism which has been in play for nearly 30 years. The symbolism of the financial crash, the end of Lehman Brothers, can be seen to be part of a much larger mosaic of changes and reforms introduced across advanced Western economies from the mid-1970s onwards. These social and economic changes, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom, promoted by the New Right can be seen as part of a broader set of processes which encompassed a redefinition of the role of the state in public and welfare policy. Whilst, the changes introduced in the United Kingdom did not, in themselves, reduce significantly the percentage of state funding as a proportion of GDP, the language and political conversation and context changed significantly.

The impact of these changes, in language, assumptions and the way in which policy choices were framed is still evident in terms of both understanding the aims and policies of New Labour after 1997 and the

Coalition after 2010 in the United Kingdom. We can see evidence of a shared discourse and assumptions. The differences between UK mainstream political parties from the late 1980s onwards became marginal. There were some important differences between the two key parties in some policy areas – regional development, urban regeneration, a desire for more pluralist politics, an enfranchised voluntary and community sector, and a more explicit and direct intervention into early years of education for children under 5 years. But, there were also some key overlapping assumptions and these included scepticism over the Euro Zone initiative and the integration of the European Union into more than a trading and labour market project, a wish to deregulate health and welfare services and open them up to the private and not for profit providers, a commitment to introduce work fare schemes to reduce long-term unemployment and to reduce welfare costs too, and a wish to reduce over time the proportion of GDP spent on social and welfare provision.

Across North America and within the European Union, these policy and political questions were, themselves, reflected in both domestic and international politics. The tensions between the ‘Old World’ and the ‘New World’ which were expressed through international conflicts in Iraq and through the rise of globalisation were sometimes read at a simplistic level as a conflict between North Atlantic neo-liberalism and European social democracy. But such categorisations are an oversimplification of much more complex social, political and economic changes. However, they do point to some of the broader and more challenging changes which have taken place over the last 30 years in terms of our conceptualisation of ‘public sector management’ and how we think about the impact of the current crisis.

This edited series, of which this is volume 1, draws together a range of different perspectives to explore some of these changes and developments and to anticipate their implications for practitioners and researchers within the field of public sector management. We intend to create a model of thinking and analysis which would facilitate greater critical self-reflection than is sometimes possible through conventional publishing or dissemination approaches. We are aware that in some countries the growth of performance measurement of research outputs and publications can lead to a more cautious and less challenging approach to enquiry. We hope this series will explicitly encourage contributors to take ideas for a walk to offer new and innovative ways of sharing their ideas and interpretations and to welcome contributions which offer different insights and ways of seeing and framing the research and practice agendas. We also draw together contributions

which are less Euro-centric or US-centric in their approach and outlook, and we hope that subsequent volumes will reflect this intention.

## THINKING ABOUT THE SCALE OF CHANGE

There is an important intellectual and conceptual challenge for many of us working across the broad field of public sector management. Part of this challenge stems from the observation that there are three connected but separate profound policy and political changes taking place. Firstly, there is the impact of neo-liberalism as an ideological project and as a model(s) of managing national economies and social and welfare policy. We recognise that there are competing definitions of neo-liberalism and that we need to be careful about over-generalising its effect and its coherence. But, it does seem to us that by taking a longer term view we can see how the language and ideas of the primacy of markets and, in particular, markets in social and welfare policy have become dominant. This is not to say that in some places there is no resistance to these ideas and we can observe in the European Union how for a long time there was very explicit resistance to the ideas of the New Right. But the desire to weaken the role of the state as funder and provider of welfare services and the emergence of a countervailing that markets and the privatisation of the welfare sector is the most appropriate choice is a demonstration of an ideological shift.

Secondly, the power and challenge of globalisation to the relative autonomy of nation states to develop independent or quasi-independent economic choices are linked to the ideological shift to the right expressed through neo-liberalism. Why does this matter? It seems that it matters in a number of important ways not least because as we look to make sense of changes within nation states and localities or regions, we need to understand the economic choices political leaders can make or are able to make. The European Union provides a model of pooling or sharing decision-making between nation states, but what are the political and policy choices which get ruled because they are seen as difficult or not within the gift of political elites? We can see this too in the rise of economic blocs outside the European Union or North America. The old assumptions upon which the IMF or the WTO were set up post-1945 no longer hold sway. And in that sense we are seeing competing centres of economic growth and influence, and these are not just about China. Alongside and embedded within these new economies are questions of the relationship(s) between the state and civil society as well as the state and the market.



Thirdly, and for us the most significant, there is the impact of the financial crash. We think that this was and remains a transformative event or 'process'. We also think that at the level of political elites and governing elites too (and here we include senior public administrators or public sector leaders), the full consequences of what has happened is only emerging. We do think that this event or process is like the oil crisis of 1973. It is much more profound and has the potential to destabilise governments across the globe in a way that 1973 did not do. The implications or consequences of the financial crash for those of us involved in analysing the field of public sector management includes reconceptualising the underpinning intellectual and discipline base of the field; revisiting or reimagining the way in which we might develop the field as a focus of study and reflection for practitioners as well as researchers; examining the shifts in the existing paradigm upon which we think about public policy and its administration, development, implementation and evaluation; and looking and listening to voices and experiences beyond North America and Europe.

### ANTICIPATING THESE DEBATES

What follows is an attempt to draw together some of these themes and questions. We do not examine all of them in volume one. We hope that in subsequent volumes we will draw in additional contributors and explore different questions and ideas. We have asked colleagues to be speculative and thought-provoking as well as seeking to link their questions with practice and research. We really value the synergies that come from linking together practice with research. We are sceptical about keeping these two worlds apart and we hope that what follows will be received as a taking a lot of ideas 'for a walk'.

In Chapter 1, Karen Johnston Miller examines the traditions and assumptions which have informed contemporary debates within public administration and public management. Her contribution is really valuable and important for a number of reasons: firstly, as she argues, we need to internationalise the debate over the future of the discipline; she sets out some important arguments which focus our thinking on what sense do we make of the current crisis if we do not imagine that how we frame the debate on the state and civil society is not mediated through the particularities of place and time. Secondly, she looks at the underpinning intellectual and academic base for public administration/public management, and thirdly, she very skilfully explores and reflects upon its changes over the past 20–30 years.

In Chapter 2, we look at the changing role of Business and Management Schools. We are interested in exploring what different models of organising and structuring research and teaching would look like. We think that the conventional model of business and management education ignores (to a large extent) the potential of the not for profit sector and we try to set out our ideas as to what an alternative might look like. We think that we need to integrate more explicitly our discussions on teaching and learning with those of broad public policy. Indeed, we welcome more contributions on this theme.

Chapter 3 by Stuart Speeden, Chapter 6 by Lorraine Johnston and Chapter 9 by Linda Rush and John Diamond are concerned with different public policy initiatives which are, themselves, informed by a recognition that existing structures or models of practice are failing. Stuart Speeden examines the relationship between public sector management and equalities and human rights – whilst locating some of his empirical work in the United Kingdom he sets these relationships in a broader context. The tension between the rights of individuals and the state and how those rights are secured and protected is examined in this chapter. We think that is one area of public policy where there has been a focus on legislation and regulation but little attempt to set the equalities and human rights agenda in a public management frame. Lorraine Johnston looks at different approaches to decentralising decision-making within local government in the United Kingdom. Her analysis of the challenges and difficulties remind us of the need to look at the political context within which public managers are located and the extent to which they are supported and prepared for changes and challenges to their roles and perceived legitimacy. Linda Rush and John Diamond reflect upon one initiative to promote the idea and practice of ‘partnership learning’ across a complex initiative which brought together a university and schools. They place this initiative within the broader discussion of ‘new professionalism’ – the need to revisit the ways in which traditional public sector professionals are taught and mentored. ‘New Professionalism’ has been associated with the New Right and this chapter draws upon work which has been informed by an alternative model of learning and thinking.

Chapter 4 by Ricardo C. Gomes and Humberto Falcão-Martins, Chapter 5 by Edoardo Ongaro, Chapter 7 by Guru Prakash Prabhakar and Pankaj Saran, and Chapter 8 by Owen E. Hughes draw together experience, knowledge and insights on Brazil, Greece, India and Australia. In each of their chapters, they focus upon the patterns of change and development across the public sector. In each of their chapters, they raise questions about

the ways in which we make sense of the relationships between the state and civil society. Across Latin America, as Ricardo C. Gomes argues, we need to reimagine our understanding of the relationships within nation states and between the key civic and public institutions of the state, universities, political institutions, commerce and public welfare. It's in these relationships that we can observe how power is understood, exercised and challenged. As Guru Prakash Prabhakar suggests, we do need to reflect upon the social and intellectual relationships which inform the public administration discourse. In this chapter, he draws upon interviews with key civil servants to inform his analysis. Edoardo Ongaro looks at the ways in which Greece and other Southern European counties have developed their model and practice of public sector management. In each of these chapters, the impact of the crash and the consequences it poses for the state and civil society are explored and discussed.

We hope that this series will stimulate debate and discussion. We are aware that the context we all work in is unpredictable and in a period of change and transition. We think that this series will add to the debate and to our own reflections on practice and research.

John Diamond

Joyce Liddle

*Editors*

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# CHAPTER 1

## THE FUTURE OF THE DISCIPLINE: TRENDS IN PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT

Karen Johnston Miller

### ABSTRACT

*Purpose – The chapter provides a review of the debates about the discipline of public administration and public management as art, craft, and science. Thus, the chapter includes a conceptualization of public administration and a discussion of public administration and public management research, scholarship, and practice. The review of the discipline includes a historical perspective and contemporary debates of public administration, new public management (NPM), public sector management, and governance in order to discuss the future trajectories and trends of the discipline.*

*Design/Methodology/Approach – A range of historical, seminal, and recently published scholarly works are reviewed and discussed, including also an analysis based on primary and secondary research of journal databases, conference proceedings, academic schools, and websites relevant to the discipline.*

*Findings – The study of government in various guises – whether public administration, public management, governance, public policy – will*

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Emerging and Potential Trends in Public Management: An Age of Austerity  
Critical Perspectives on International Public Sector Management, Volume 1, 1–24

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ISSN: 2045-7944/doi:10.1108/S2045-7944(2012)0000001004

*continue to develop, evolve, and fascinate scholars and practitioners. There will be a continued interest and study of the business of government with three possible trends: (1) a narrow focus on technocratic, managerial approaches in an attempt to provide solutions for more effective and efficient government; (2) a multidisciplinary approach to addressing complex social problems or "wicked policy" problems across narrow specialized interests for "greater principles" of society; and (3) methodological pluralism in the study of government, which may add to the depth or fragmentation of the discipline.*

*Research limitations/Implications – The research is limited to a review with some primary and secondary research. It provides scholars and practitioners with the conceptualization of public administration, public management and governance. The chapter provides a critical perspective of the state of research and scholarship with an argument that academics need to move beyond parochial debates within the discipline and provide practitioners with empirically based solutions to increasingly complex social and "wicked policy" problems.*

*Practical implications – This chapter provides scholars, students, and practitioners with (1) a conceptual understanding of public administration, public management, NPM and governance; (2) a historical and contemporary perspective of the discipline; and (3) a critical perspective of research and scholarship that will provide a debate on the state of discipline.*

*Originality/Value – The chapter is a synthesis and review of the discipline in terms of research and scholarship drawing upon international perspectives to provide a critical debate for scholars and practitioners.*

**Keywords:** Public administration; new public management (NPM); public sector management; government; policy; governance

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades there has been much debate and critical discussion on the future of public administration and public management as a discipline (Chandler, 1991; Hood, 1999; Pollitt, 2010; Rhodes, 1996a). These debates often center on scenarios about public administration as a discipline in decline and fragmented, particularly in response to the rise of

new public management (NPM) and themes of governance (Hood, 2011). This book chapter provides a critical perspective of these debates by first outlining the discipline of public administration, the emergence of public sector management and various public administration guises such as governance. Second, the chapter provides a critical perspective of public administration and public management research and scholarship, and concludes with future trends and trajectories of the discipline.

The chapter argues that debates about the discipline of public administration are not contemporary, but ongoing from its emergence as discipline. It is a debate primarily within the United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) academic communities, but it is of relevance to the broader international academic community – latter chapters of this volume explore public sector management in other parts of the world – since there has been a global transfer and isomorphism of public sector reforms, and there are lessons to be learned with regards to trends in public sector management.

There are aspects of the public administration as art, craft, and/or science (Raadschelders, 2011) that grow in interest while others lose their fascination in academic and practitioner communities. What is indeed a truism of public administration, public management or the study of government is its resilience in whatever guise. This is a feature of the multidisciplinary of the field of study – arguably its strength. If we took an Occam's razor<sup>1</sup> approach to this debate, the simplest explanation is that whatever form or guise the discipline takes, it is the *study of government*, and this will continue, but with most scholarly endeavors there are arguments and counterarguments.

## **PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: THE DISCIPLINE AND THE DEBATE**

It is the objective of administrative study to discover, first, what government can properly and successfully do, and secondly, how it can do these proper things with utmost possible efficiency and at least possible cost either of money and energy. (Woodrow Wilson, 1887, p. 197)

The quote from Woodrow Wilson's (1887) seminal paper, "The Study of Administration," started a debate on the study of public administration as a discipline. In this debate, Wilson (1887) contrasts public administration with politics. He goes further, in a normative sense, arguing that public administration should be concerned about administrative efficiency and effectiveness – a concern still with us today. His paper nonetheless started



the debate of public administration as a separate field of study from that of politics. A read of Wilson's paper leaves one with the impression that in attempting to define the discipline, Wilson draws upon other disciplines to define what public administration is and is not. For example, Wilson (1887, pp. 209–210) describes public administration:

The field of public administration is a field of business. It is removed from the hurry and strife of politics; it at most points stands apart even from the debatable grounds of constitutional study. It is a part of political life only as the methods of the counting-house are a part of the life of society; only as machinery is part of the manufactured product. But it is, at the same time, raised very far above the dull level of mere technical detail by the fact that through its greater principles it is directly connected with the lasting maximums of political wisdom, the permanent truths of political progress.

Wilson (1887) therefore distinguished public administration as a discipline, although distinct in its concern with the *business of government*, nonetheless concerned with aspects of government such as politics, law, regulation, society, etc. Wilson nonetheless in terms of attempting to define the discipline gave rise to the dichotomous disciplinary paradigm between politics and administration. This over the decades had become a focus of debate about the discipline, mostly in the US academic community (see Peters & Pierre, 2005; Khodr, 2005; Meier, 2007; Raadschelders, 2008).

Public administration is not merely about the technical details of government business but Wilson (1887) normatively argued, public administration ought to be concerned with greater principles of society. In this sense, Wilson was referring to how government could better serve society and how government could improve society. Similarly, other seminal works by renowned scholars such as Waldo, Simon, and Goodnow provide a conceptual discussion of public administration and in addition provide a historical context to the discipline. The review of this literature provides a rich nuance of the field of study and indeed its struggle as a distinct discipline from political science. In one of the more foremost published works in the area, *The Administrative State* written by Dwight Waldo in 1948, a proponent of public administration as a distinct discipline, he attempts to reconcile the debate on public administration. Waldo (1948) famously stated that public administration is “a subject matter in search of a discipline” and suffers from an “identity crisis” (Waldo, 1968), but is concerned with the “business of government” (Waldo, 1948). Although public administration is concerned with the business of government, the business of government takes place within a political context and hence public administration is embedded in various fields of study, particularly political science. Goodnow (1900), for example, argued that politics cannot