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GOVERNANCE, ADMINISTRATION & DEVELOPMENT

MAKING THE STATE WORK

Governance, Administration and Development

Making the State Work

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Preface

The idea for this book arose over the breakfast table in Canberra in 1990. At that time both of us had deep concerns about the ways in which the public sector in developing countries operates. However, we had even deeper concerns about the dominant policy agenda of that period, which focused on minimizing the role of the public sector, rolling back the state until it almost disappeared and which had just begun to naively decree 'good government' for all.

From our years working together at the Administrative College of Papua New Guinea – reinforced by research and consultancy in Asia, Africa and Latin America – we were well aware of just how difficult it is to improve the performance of bureaucracies. However, we were convinced, and remain convinced, that public sector activity can make a major contribution to the achievement of developmental goals and the creation of reasonably stable societies that can meet the material, social and, perhaps, spiritual needs of the bulk of their populaces. In part this was an analytical conclusion of our readings of East and Southeast Asian development and of the history of Western Europe. It was also grounded in our personal experiences – two Liverpudlians who had benefited from high-quality state education, a national health service free at the point of delivery and the knowledge that a public social security net underpinned our efforts to secure livelihoods and careers.

While elements of ideology no doubt support our belief that the public sector has a major role to play in development, neither of us are ideologues. The claims of the far left ('the state must do everything') and the far right ('the market can do everything') have always appeared fallacious to us. The 'either . . . or' analyses of most of the twentieth century must be replaced by 'both . . . and' in coming years. The big question is not 'public or private': rather it is, how do we get 'public and private' to most effectively meet social needs.

This book has been a long time in the writing, but fortunately as the decade has rolled on we have found that the simplistic 'private–good, public–bad' propositions that we heard in 1990 have been largely discredited. Policy debate about 'governance' still remains in its infancy, though, and none of the major international development

agencies have yet found a way of relating their normative political models to the complex and very varied societies of the developing world.

Everything has a history, and many of the ideas and issues that we explore here were part of the debate about 'development administration' in the 1960s. From these roots the reader will find that s/he has a vast interdisciplinary range of concepts and analytical frameworks to explore. On one side is the development studies literature, with its web of economic, sociological and political ideas. On the other is the literature of management, grounded in organization sociology, psychology and business studies. We have tried to relate and bridge these literatures throughout the volume, and hope that we have achieved some success in this endeavour.

No book of this sort could be produced without the help and assistance of many other people. We name only a few here but our sincere thanks to all who have indirectly helped us in our task. First mention must go to our long-suffering publisher, Steven Kennedy. We have missed final deadline after final deadline, but never once has he let this spoil his good humour – sincere apologies Steven! In Canberra, our thanks to Sheila Wood for applying her multiple skills and technological expertise to the production of the manuscript. In Manchester our thanks to Debra Whitehead for processing the manuscript and Jayne Hindle for managing the lines of communication between Manchester and Canberra (and Dhaka and Nairobi, and Manila and Vientiane amongst others). Thanks also to Paul Mosley, now at the University of Reading, for tutoring David Hulme in the gentle art of academic overcommitment and helping him develop the confidence and energy to handle several writing tasks at one and the same time.

Colleagues and students at the Universities of Canberra and Manchester have contributed greatly to the evolution of the book, as have contacts with public servants, NGO staff and aid agency personnel in the many countries we have worked during the 1990s.

And last, but never least, our thanks to Lulu, Georgina, Andrew, Edward, Jasmine and Saffron for tolerating our absences and our preoccupation with governance and administration, as we struggled to find the time to write this book. We have all learnt that lawns do not need cutting!

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To our wives and children –
for their tolerance and good
humour when we retreat to
our studies!

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