

# Preface

I think it's a safe assumption that if you've read further than this book's title, you care about public management, as an enterprise within the academic world and/or in government-based schools of public administration. And I'm also assuming that you're willing to listen to a case for change, along with considering how you might be part of its realization.

As the title suggests, this book is for bringing about a shift in public management, from whatever it is as a field now, to being a professional discipline; more specifically, the book promotes a twist in public management, towards being a design-oriented professional discipline. This view of public management isn't unprecedented. Some have called for a design-orientation to research and practice; others have called for public management to adopt the mantle of a profession, as opposed to suffering the loose analogies of being an art and/or science. But the sources on which this book draws don't add up to what this book is: an intellectual foundation for public management, as a collective effort to develop and learn professional knowledge, with a clear focus on strengthening professional practice within public organizations – in a phrase, it's an intellectual foundation for public management as a design-oriented professional discipline.

Describing the book as an “intellectual foundation” – and titling it as I have done – sends signals that reading it will be neither a walk in the park, nor an entertaining show. But don't judge a book by its cover, or by the gravitas of its rhetoric. This book is designed specifically to be a page-turner, for one sole reason: it won't work otherwise. One reason is that the book has to appeal to students of the subject, as well as to newcomers being recruited to join this academic enterprise. Otherwise it won't be discussed, and then it won't become a meaningful vehicle for introducing the idea of public management as a design-oriented professional discipline. The book makes use of several rhetorical devices to tackle this challenge. I won't say more, to avoid spoiling the surprise.

This book's main audience is people who teach the subject: long-standing professors in the field like me; disciplinary social scientists who trespass into it; doctoral students in public administration and management; and practitioners who become full- or part-time “pracademics” identified with this subject. Starting in Chapter 1, you'll get to know fictional characters fitting the respective descriptions, namely Marshall, Nora, Olivier, and Petra. However, Chapters 1 and 4 are specifically written to be assigned to masters students and discussed with them.

By the time you finish this book, you should be able to imagine a future where you wouldn't have to define the evolution of public management in successive stereotypes of administrative philosophies, such as traditional public administra-

tion, new public management, and digital governance. A future where designing is considered no less important to the professional practice of public management than issue analysis and decision-making. A future where public management is a specialization of choice within the academic field of public administration. And, a future in which public management is looked to as the leading example of a design-oriented professional discipline. If you can do this, then this book will have functioned as intended, in starting an important conversation about the future of public management. I hope it does.