

Foreword

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Changing the public sector is one of the most difficult processes. Commercial sector companies receive from the market immediate signals and are pushed towards change as the short-term, even daily, results are worsening. On the contrary, institutions face a major challenge in undertaking change processes, even when they receive a strong feedback about the dissatisfaction of citizens, the business sector and the civil society, and when there are clear signals that the services they provide are no longer coherent with a society that is becoming more and more dynamic.

In effect, change and in particular the reform process require some conditions, like the perception of the gap between the actual needs and the quality and the quantity of services provided, the analysis and the interpretation of the causes of such a gap, which is influenced by different views of the society (ideologies or interest groups) and the consensus on the direction of modernization. In the modern society, owing to the effect of democracy in a changing society (multiculturalism, tolerance for different values, immigration and multiethnic composition), it is easier to have a majority of people against the actual functioning of the state and the local governments, but it is much more difficult to create a coherent majority in favour of a new shape of the public system: it is difficult to *reform* the public sector.

The difficulties increase in the Napoleonic model of state, largely based on formal regulation of the administration and on the bureaucratic organization model. There is in this system a special branch of law, the administrative law, that engenders a set of formal rules that require compliance and are difficult to modify even if and when they are obsolete and become an obstacle to change and the adaptation of the public administration to its aims and ultimate goals.

Edoardo Ongaro, drawing on the Pollitt and Bouckaert authoritative book *Public Management Reform: A Comparative Analysis* (2004), had the courage to apply the conceptual framework of (public) management and to adapt it to the peculiarity of the Napoleonic model of state. Following up the hard work of data collection, documentary analysis and field investigation – conducted also through the coordination of a number of

research projects as well as an intense participation in international *fora*, especially the conferences organized by EGPA (the European Group of Public Administration) and particularly the EGPA Permanent Study Group he has chaired since 2006 – he can now give evidence in this book of his conceptual elaboration that has been developed over many years. He has focused on the concept of ‘factors that stimulate and condition’ the reform processes and on the concept of ‘reform trajectory’ (see Chapter 1) and as a first step he has applied it to the Italian context – the one he knows best (see Part I of the book).

After having fine-tuned the conceptual framework of analysis and having elaborated an explanatory model fitting the Italian reform process, it was much more straightforward, though surely not easy, for Edoardo Ongaro to elaborate the material collected on France, Greece, Portugal and Spain and address broader-scope theoretical questions (Part II of the book).

On the Napoleonic model states there are some comparative books, but most of them address the problem of change in these states exclusively from a political science or an administrative law perspective. The work of Edoardo Ongaro is the only one, to my knowledge, that adopts the management framework to the study of the transformation of the public sector in these countries.

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