INTRODUCTION

This book focuses on strategic public management, including the aspirations and activities to develop public value. Recent years have seen a surge in the literature on strategy and public management. This involves more traditional thinking about strategy and planning in public organizations, taken further by the idea initiated by Mark Moore (1995, 2013) of Harvard University that public organizations act strategically to create public value and on to the idea that the strategies are pursued in inter-organizational networks and partnerships (Bryson & Crosby 2015). Currently, there is a renewed interest in how states make governing strategies that in some ways signals a return to earlier theories of the state that have been prevalent in political science and political economy. Additionally, there are more broad international policy movements in labs that promote certain concepts and ideas that are likely to have an appeal across countries. Among these concepts are “innovation” and “design” (Bason 2017; Barzelay 2019) which international organizations like the OECD are strategically promoting as concepts for forward-looking management and governance for public sector organizations.

While the concept of strategy in public sector organizations has been known for some time, there is nevertheless a need to present the variety of approaches in the literature on how strategic public management is perceived. The following section sets out five ways to see strategic public management.

The first way is to examine the individual public manager as a strategic actor. Mark Moore, in his seminal work on creating public value, focused his attention at first on how individual managers pursue and create public value that is recognized by political authorizers and other relevant stakeholders. The initial 1995 book from Mark Moore began with the town librarian as a public manager who found a way to create public value from the services her library was delivering to the citizens and the public. Zeger van der Wal (2017) has focused on the needs of the twenty-first-century public manager to be strategic in his or her actions.

The second way to examine strategic public management is to look at how organizations formulate and implement formal strategy. This focus on strategic planning and strategy work at the organizational level is the most widespread notion of strategic public management, and the one where most books and articles have been published (Bryson, Edwards & Van Slyke 2018). Strategic public management has a firm place in public administration (Bryson & George 2022). It is a now a well-covered
field with many textbooks and seminal works, including John M. Bryson’s (2018) *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* and UK scholar Paul Joyce’s various works that examine strategic action in the public sector (e.g. Joyce, Bryson & Holzer 2014; Joyce 2015; Joyce & Drumaux 2018). Mark Moore’s (1995, 2013) work also explicitly acknowledges the organizational context that public managers pursue their quest in which to create public value. A recent example is a study of how local governments’ strategies unfold (Jacobsen & Johnsen 2020).

The third way to examine strategic public management is to look at inter-organizational relations, and the way public sector organizations collaborate with other public sector organizations, and with organizations in the private sector, including companies, NGOs, and other civil society organizations in governance networks (Klijn & Koppenjan 2015). Collaborative governance has long been a trend as works by Donahue and Zeckhauser (2012) and Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) have shown. Recently, attention on how public sectors create public value has also incorporated the collaborative perspective. Bryson and Crosby (2018) have shown how strategic public management must necessarily be collaborative in today’s complex world (see also Bryson, Barberg, Crosby & Patton 2021).

The fourth way to examine strategic public management is to look at the systems level and focus on how states make strategy. The revived interest in state theory and strategies for governing at the central government level has been promoted most visibly by Alasdair Roberts (2018, 2019) from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Roberts regrets the overwhelming focus on the micro-level of activities in the public sector, and fears that the macro-perspectives and states and how they make strategies are in danger of being lost. Roberts and others with him have therefore started a renewed discussion on state theory (Milward et al. 2016) and on how governments formulate longer-term strategies and respond to upheavals in the surrounding context. Roberts (2019) has formulated his position as *Strategies for Governing* (the title of his recent book) while the political theorist Francis Fukuyama (2013) asked “What Is Governance?” in order to re-focus the field of public administration and public management on to the bigger questions of states and survival. John Campbell and John Hall (2015) published *The World of States* in which they examine the concept of the state today. The complexity of digitalized public services adds to that challenge of governing a state (Mergel 2017; Mergel, Rethemeyer & Isset 2017). And, of course, there is an extended literature on multi-level governance that deals with the perspective that states interact with other levels of government, including international organizations. The historical institutional literature talks about “the public administration of state building” as a separate line of inquiry within the broader political science literature of historical institutionalism (Fioretos et al. 2016).

The fifth way to examine strategic public management is to focus on broader strategies that international organizations are trying to put forward and to promote vis-à-vis national governments and sub-national governments. These organizations act in some ways like international think tanks that work with ideas that might be generated from individual countries, but which they try to spread to a wider population of states and organizations through reports and other types of communication.
The OECD is a well-known international organization that tries to process and spread international public management ideas that encourage national and sub-national governments to pursue certain strategies. An example of this is OECD’s “Observatory of Public Sector Innovation” (OECD 2019) that assembles ideas and practices about public sector innovation and then launches and promotes these ideas and practices to a wider audience. Another example could be how the European Union’s “Europe 2020 Strategy” has evolved and been evaluated (Drumaux and Joyce 2020).

Some of these ways to examine strategic public management have held a more prominent place in the literature than have others. It seems abundantly clear that the focus on strategic work or strategic planning at the organizational level has achieved substantial interest over the years, and it is consequently a well-covered theme. The chapters in Part III therefore focus on pursuing recent additions to the literature.

The less explored avenue is how the different ways to examine strategic public management are related to each other. We therefore present in our volume discussions between the different perspectives on strategic public management. As Roberts (2019) has indicated, the fields of public administration and public management can benefit from acknowledging that there are different levels of analysis, micro, meso and macro (and, we would add, an international one), and that consequently there is a need to discuss how activities in strategic public management relate to each other. This Handbook therefore aims to combine the different views on strategic public management by (a) giving consideration to each of the theoretical perspectives, and (b) discussing the relationship between them.

The Handbook is divided into three parts. Part I considers the field (i.e. strategy, public value and the state); Part II explores the challenges, approaches and new solutions; Part III reflects on the way forward and examines strategically acting public organizations for value creation systems.

PART I: THE FIELD: STRATEGY, PUBLIC VALUE AND THE STATE

Chapter 2 is by Ewan Ferlie: “Strategic management and the study of public agencies: a historical overview”. Ferlie guides the reader through a historical tour de force of various thinkers and approaches that have dealt with strategic thinking in government. Chapter 3 by Michael Barzelay explores “Finding a role for design-oriented practice in strategic public management: a conceptual engineering approach”. This is a very dense and tightly written chapter that goes to the core of the conceptual elements. Barzelay discusses the elements inherent in strategy, government and public organizations. Barzelay does this with great care and attention to detail and with reference to Moore’s public value concept. The conceptual deep dive provides the reader with a unique insight into the foundational questions related to putting the words strategy, government and public organizations in the same sentence. Chapter 4 by Alasdair Roberts is about strategy at the state level. Roberts elaborates on the view of his recent book Strategies for Governing and calls for a renewed need for
examining strategies at the state/national level. Roberts notes that much of the recent decades’ research on public management has been neglecting the state in favour of analysis of decentralized public service delivery practices. Public management and administration scholars did not pay serious attention to the ways governments conduct their longer-term strategies, according to Roberts. The chapter builds on the analysis and also considers some of the implications for future analysis of how states’ strategies operate. Following on from that, in Chapter 5, Donald Kettl asks “Is strategy possible in a federal system?” How states make strategies is often seen from a unitary state’s perspective, but many states happen to be built on federalism, including the USA and Germany. With observations from the USA, Kettl examines how strategic thinking and action appear when a system is thoroughly federalized. An analysis of a concrete state strategy is provided by Ian Elliott in Chapter 6, “The strategic state: a case study of devolved government in Scotland”. Elliott examines how the Scottish government set out a purposeful and transparent strategy, and discusses how the state strategy was conceived and later implemented. Elliott also offers some important lessons for the future.

PART II: CHALLENGES, APPROACHES AND NEW SOLUTIONS

John Bryson, Barbara Crosby and Bill Barberg write about “Public value governance and strategic public management” in Chapter 7. They unfold the story of how the concept of public value in the Mark Moore sense and the public values approach by Bozeman and Jorgensen became incorporated into their own thinking about their particular work on strategic planning and leadership for the common good. They argue that scholars now must consider strategy management-at-scale to capture the challenge of dealing with wicked problems and collaborative imperatives. The chapter also adds insights from the concept of collective impact to their strategic management-at-scale approach. Thereby, the authors construct a sophisticated theoretical framework that takes the research agenda on strategic public management to a more advanced level.

In Chapter 8, Per Lægreid and Lise H. Rykkja examine the topical issue of “Strategic public management in crises”. The literature on crisis management has received more attention in recent years in light of many crises, including the climate crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic. The authors argue that strategic public management in crises differs from more long-term strategic public management at the state level in stable times. The chapter discusses how governments prepare for crises, aspire to prevent crises and how they respond to crises once they are here. The authors are in line with Alasdair Roberts in looking at the state/national level of crisis management and not the organizational and operational level in concrete crises. The authors provide working definitions of a crisis, crisis management, governance capacity and governance legitimacy. The authors note how strategic crisis management has several stages from preparation over response and recovery to learning. The
Theoretical inspiration to this chapter comes from a broad organizational institutional approach that the authors have been contributing to for years.

The role of public innovation labs has been prominent since the early 2010s. Their continuing relevance is up for discussion as their impact is being debated. These new solutions to conducting strategic public management in practice are examined in two chapters by authors with both theoretical and practical backgrounds. The vocabulary for public innovation labs has shifted throughout the years from innovation to design. In Chapter 9, Christian Bason writes about the “Cross-fertilisation of design labs and strategic public management”. As a former director of the Danish Mindlab and a current director of the Danish Design Center, he has been at the forefront of these debates. Bason draws on his leadership experience with labs and compares the present design approach with the innovation approach, and the aspiration for governments to perform strategically in new ways. Emma Blomkamp and Jenny Lewis have experience as scholars and practitioners from Australia and New Zealand. In that part of the world, 52 public innovation labs existed in 2018. In Chapter 10, “Magic PILs to cure the ills of public management? The rise of public innovation labs as design-for-policy entrepreneurs”, Blomkamp and Lewis examine how public innovation labs function as policy entrepreneurs and design coalitions. They argue that public innovation labs can be considered design-for-policy entrepreneurs, which means public innovation labs are championing design solutions for public services.

The actual work of making innovation succeed in practice in organizations is discussed by Anne Reff Pedersen, Vibeke Kristine Scheller and Ditte Thøgersen in Chapter 11, “A public innovation strategy from the frontline: everyday innovation”. Here they present two empirical case studies in the child care sector and the health sector that show how strategic public management can be conceived as a kind of strategy-in-practice perspective. The contrast lies in comparing a policy perspective with an organizational practice perspective.

Artificial intelligence is a new solution that is put on the radar by Christopher Koliba and Emma Spett in Chapter 12, “What a democratically anchored public administrator needs to understand about artificial intelligence and strategic management”. Koliba and Spett examine the various meanings and aspects of artificial intelligence and how that is changing the very foundations under which strategic public management functions. As Koliba and Spett note, artificial intelligence presents both daunting challenges and a range of new possibilities for strategic public management. In addition, the authors give an overview of new policy documents from the USA, the European Union and the UK. The relationship between human interaction and artificial intelligence systems is discussed as well.
PART III: REFLECTIONS ON THE WAY FORWARD: STRATEGICALLY ACTING PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS FOR VALUE CREATION SYSTEMS

Chapter 13, “Strategic planning: the way forward”, by Bert George, Rowie Huijbregts, Maria Tiggelaar, Laure Vandersmissen, Sven Vanhengel and Bishoy Louis Zaki examines the well-known topic of strategic planning from a fresh angle. First, the authors discuss the many ways that strategic planning has been used in the literature. They go on to argue that strategic planning can be linked to many contemporary issues in organization and management, including public values, red tape, organizational change, public policy and transnational governance. By presenting this new way forward, the authors argue that strategic planning is here to stay.

In Chapter 14, “Business model innovation and the financial dimension of strategy in the public sector”, Kuno Schedler writes on business model innovation and the financial dimension of strategy in the public sector. Schedler’s point is that the concept of a business model has been curiously overlooked in the literature on strategic public management so far, and that a business model concept has something very concrete to offer scholars and practitioners. Schedler notes that the concept of a business model is more than just labelling it “budgeting” as part of a strategic process. If actors understand not only their own business model, but also the business models of their partners, then public value creation can be achieved in a collaborative setting.

How to act strategically as an individual public manager is the topic of Chapter 15, Kurt Klaudi Klausen’s “The individual public manager as a strategic actor in relation to the organizational environment”. Klausen emphasizes the importance of analysing the institutional environments in which public managers act. Klausen also places the public manager’s strategic actions in the realm of the current debate on competing and co-existing public governance paradigms.

The strategic role of public managers at the top level of the public sector is the topic of Linda Colley, Shelley Woods and Brian Head’s chapter “Strategic public management and the role of senior executives: the case of Australia”. Chapter 16 documents several decades of public management reform in Australia and contemplates how new skill requirements and expectations of delivering outcomes was part of this process. They also voice a concern about politicization and lack of accountability associated with some of the reforms.

In Chapter 17, “Trust-based public management: conceptualization and lessons from the Swedish trust reform”, Louise Bringselius conveys her experience with a recent Swedish public management reform, the trust reform. Brinselius was chairing a research-based part of the Trust Commission that produced the report, and has undertaken research on the Swedish reform effort herself. Her chapter explains the theory behind trust-based management and summarizes the lessons from 12 research projects conducted in relation to the Swedish trust reform. The chapter is important for understanding how a concept of trust can be linked to strategic public management activities.
A final contemplation about the rest of the book. The reader will meet many definitions of what constitutes strategic public management. A grand definition that everyone agrees on is probably elusive as it has to take into account many theoretical and empirical developments over time. A basic understanding that we have used as a starting point in which to place our work is that strategic public management as a minimum concerns the way managers in organizations with a public purpose (which could be a state) plan, collaborate and deliver public value in relation to agreed aspirations over time, and the challenges they face.

REFERENCES


