1. Public administration, public management and governance

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This chapter introduces and contextualizes public administration, public management and governance as key concepts with fundamental structural and operational implications for government and public policy. It sets out a historical perspective on the paradigm shifts encapsulated in the movement from public administration to (new) public management to governance, while arguing for the continued importance of public administration as an overarching paradigm. It summarizes the consequences and implications of these shifts, and categorizes the major academic and political critiques of the theory and practice contained within the paradigms. The need for caution regarding uncritical acceptance of supposed international ubiquity, or even national consistency, is stressed and significant divergence from assumed ‘norms’ in certain parts of the globe and, over time, within certain states, is noted. Finally a series of ‘sub-concepts’ is examined in order to determine the extent to which they represent significant refinements and developments of the major themes, or have the status of passing fads and fashions.

KEY CONCEPTS, HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND PARADIGM SHIFTS

In one simple and straightforward form of analysis, it is possible to view the key concepts that form the subject of this chapter as stages of linear development in a chronological and historical context, and also in terms of paradigmatic shifts. Thus, to coin a phrase, public administration begat public management, which in turn begat governance. The weaknesses of such a sweeping generalization are immediately apparent, however. In the real world of government, there are major overlaps between developmental phases, and, in practice, there is no neat and clean succession of modes or regimes. Additionally, the academic paradigms are significantly more complex than these shifts would suggest, and, in particular, it can be argued that, depending upon the prevailing mode of analysis, governance is both an element within public administration and public management,
and also one among several possible ‘successors’ to the latter (as discussed below).

An alternative, and more useful, approach is to view public administration not merely as a description of a rather traditional, historic mode of government whose time has come and gone, but as an overarching paradigm within which we can locate subsequent developments, including public management and governance. This can help us come to terms with the continued deployment of the term ‘public administration’ as a working description of the organizational settings for government. Public administration continued to be the default description of the central and local structures, systems and processes established for the creation of policy and the delivery of public services in many parts of the globe, long after the apparent embrace of (new) public management by the Anglo-Americans. However, the persistence of the term can be seen even in states such as the UK, where it is often assumed that public administration has been superseded by public management and its new variants. To cite one example: the existence of a select committee of the UK Parliament with a focus on public administration is indicative of something more than a reluctance to rename the body; this speaks to the continued utility of the concept.

Some critics have argued, convincingly, that the new public management (NPM) was really a sub-species of public administration, and its effects were restricted due to, inter alia, the relative poverty of its conceptual and theoretical bases, the weaknesses of its claims of novelty, and the lack of evidence to support its prescriptions for improved organizational and societal outcomes (see, e.g., Pollitt, 1990; Frederickson and Smith, 2003).

Public administration is a multifaceted concept, with some key features at its core. As a discipline, it encompasses, inter alia:

- administrative theories
- the history of public sector bodies
- biographical studies of civil servants and other public officials
- organizational and institutional arrangements for service delivery
- relationships between officials and politicians, and between both of these and the public
- modes of accountability and control
- citizens’ rights of access to public bodies and the information they hold
- policy making and implementation
- public finance and budgeting
- public sector performance (and the measurement and evaluation thereof)
Traditionally, much of the focus of public administration was on the workings of government departments at central and local levels, and state-run entities including nationalized industries. The hierarchical, rule-bound public administration systems favoured by Max Weber and Woodrow Wilson as a means to insulate officialdom at central and local levels from the corruption of raw politics evolved over time to become more fluid and flexible, and increased recognition came to be given to the subtleties of systems within which the exercise of significant, though accountable, influence could be wielded by ‘street-level bureaucrats’. However, notwithstanding this evolution, in the historical context, as the boundaries between the public and private sectors became increasingly blurred (due in part to increased interdependencies and privatizations of some state entities), and as the influence of private sector business approaches to management and organization increased, public administration came to be viewed in some quarters as a somewhat outdated concept. In this perspective, it was seen as rule-bound and inflexible, paying insufficient attention to the attractions of new modes of thinking and approaches to the practice of running large and complex organizations.

These developments brought challenges to, and refinements of, public administration. The reaction to three successive, yet overlapping, challenges brought about significant changes. The first challenge dated from the late 1950s and early 1960s, and had as its main focus the need to modernize systems and processes, particularly in relation to budgeting, policy making and analysis, and the associated managerial imperatives. The new, modern approaches often required new types of people in government, and in the USA, the appointment to the Kennedy administration of Robert S. McNamara as Defense Secretary was indicative of this. McNamara brought into government a combination of systems analysis based on his statistical work in the US Airforce during the Second World War, and finely honed business and management skills from his work as president of the Ford Motor Company. Despite his Republican background, his modern managerial credentials meant that he was ‘on everybody’s list of candidates’ for a job in the administration of the new Democrat president, and he was considered suitable for either
the Treasury or Defense (Dallek, 2003: 312). Under McNamara, the US Defense Department’s internal processes rapidly became a model of modernization in public administration (see Shapley, 1993). In the UK, at the same time, the Plowden Report (Plowden Committee, 1961) examined new systems for the control of public expenditure in the broader context of modernizing management in government, and the latter theme was picked up subsequently in the Fulton Report (Fulton Committee, 1968) and the Heath government’s White Paper, The Reorganisation of Central Government (HM Government, 1970). During this phase, the challenge associated with adopting more rational and strategic approaches to policy making and evaluation coincided with, and was part of, a period of ‘high modernism’ when rapid advances in science and technology, combined with a huge growth in the university-based study of the social sciences, seemed to hold out the promise of a more rational ‘designed’ set of public policies and institutions. (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011: 6)

In the second phase, broadly spanning the late 1960s to the late 1970s, the challenge was to produce new ways of organizing and managing the business of the state in the face of socioeconomic crises and apparent ‘overload’ and ‘ungovernability’ (the title and content of King, 1976, although UK focused, spoke to a global malaise). The reaction to this challenge saw serious concerns arise in relation to the ‘machinery of government’, and the launch of waves of structural and managerial reforms, many of which continued well into the 1980s and beyond. In the UK and the USA, the search for greater coordination of policy making and implementation and economies of scale saw moves to create ‘giant’ government departments (in the UK context, typified by the huge Department of the Environment), and the spread of ‘rational’ approaches to policy analysis and budgeting (including the proliferation of planned, programmed budgeting systems (PPBS) and the search for value for money (VFM)). As the vogue changed, structural ‘giantism’ gave way to a new preference for discrete organizational units with their own performance regimes and specific service delivery foci. The creation of multiple executive agencies, influenced significantly by the Swedish model of government (although always with specific local variations), could be seen throughout the globe as the 1980s progressed. In the UK context, this process was encapsulated within the ‘Next Steps’ initiative (Efficiency Unit, 1988).

Christopher Hood captured the meaning and impact of this second phase in his seminal work charting the impact of the new managerialism on public administration, and setting out the fundamental changes taking place in the functioning of public service organizations. Inter alia,
there would be increased emphasis on the disciplined use of resources, greater managerial autonomy and ‘flexibilities’, competition via tendering and contractualization, disaggregation through structural change and privatization, and the application of performance standards and measurement (Hood, 1991: 4–5). Public management, or new public management (NPM), had become the titular embodiment of the paradigm shift that encapsulated the approaches taken by the Thatcher and Reagan governments in the UK and USA respectively in the early 1980s, spread to Australia and New Zealand by the middle of that decade, and then became current across the globe (although see below for a cautionary note regarding assumed ubiquity),

driven partly by the forces of globalization and by international organizations dominated by the same countries, but also nationally by conservative and neo-liberal parties, in some cases in collaboration with mainstream social democratic parties. (Christensen and Lægreid, 2010b: 1)

Even as this happened, however, the third challenge had emerged, and from the mid-1980s onwards the reaction to this led to a new phase of development for public administration. As the mix of public, private and ‘third sector’ bodies and agencies with an involvement in policy making and delivery expanded and developed, so the complexities associated with coordination, ‘joining up’ and securing adequate accountabilities, regulation and control became increasingly acute. Influenced to some extent by the elements of the international relations literature, which sought to make sense of the ‘complex interdependencies’ in that sphere (e.g. the work of Keohane and Nye on power and interdependence – see 4th edn, 2011), public administration analysts began to stress the importance of understanding the interactions between governmental and non-governmental organizations in terms of networks (an early theoretical exposition of networks can be found in Knoke and Kuklinski, 1982, and a useful summary of the development of the theory in Enroth, 2011). Networks could be relatively closed (the ‘iron triangles’ in the USA, wherein government departments or agencies, Congressional committees and dominant lobbies or interest groups effectively incorporated key policy spheres) or open (wide and shifting arrays of departments, formal and informal interest groups from the public, private and third sectors). The literature on network theory and practice expanded beyond its US base, reflecting the increasing utility of the concepts (in the UK context, see, e.g., Jordan, 1990; Rhodes, 1990; Marsh and Rhodes, 1992).

The diffusion and fragmentation seen as a consequence of the increased significance of networks led to further theoretical and conceptual insights, including the ‘hollowing-out’ thesis. This saw governments
'lose' policy functionality ‘upwards’ (to state and transnational organizations, including foreign powers, the World Bank and multinational corporations), ‘downwards’ (to privatized and contractualized elements of the system), and ‘outwards’ (to arm’s-length bodies such as executive agencies – key sources on all of this are Rhodes, 1994, 1997). The ‘differentiated polity’ thesis focused on the effect of decentralization, subsidiarity and devolution on policy making and delivery, again adding to the impression of functional disaggregation and fragmentation (see Rhodes et al., 2003).

These theoretical and analytical approaches were closely associated with the broader governance paradigm. Influenced by the analyses of Kooiman (1993) and Pierre and Peters (2000) (their 2000 work best captures the development of their ideas), Rhodes (1997) summarized the shift from ‘government’ to ‘governance’ in terms of a new focus on the network interactions between politicians and officials (‘government’) and the non-governmental actors. The increased importance of networks, reduced role for government in some spheres, proliferation of managerial initiatives, and continuing programmes of organizational and institutional reform were key features of the new mode. Within this developmental phase of public administration, the concept of governance emerged as a response to the challenge of increasingly complex governmental and societal interactions. There was a perceived need to ‘re-engineer’ or ‘reinvent’ government. These concepts initially assumed particular significance in the USA following the publication of work by public management consultants David Osborne and Ted Gaebler (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). Their definition of ‘governance’ was broad. It was

the process by which we collectively solve our problems and meet our society’s needs. Government is the instrument we use. The instrument is outdated and the process of reinvention has begun. (Ibid.: 24)

Their work both reflected changing realities in the practice of governance at all levels of the USA, and also influenced policy makers in the Clinton administration (see Aberbach and Rockman, 2001). The ‘reinventing government’ agendas spread rapidly beyond the USA, with the core idea from Osborne and Gaebler that the fundamental role of government should be to ‘steer’ policy delivery rather than attempt to do the ‘rowing’ itself. This built upon the basic theses of NPM, recognized the vital importance of networks, and aligned with the increasing emphasis being given to service performance comparisons, competition among service providers, optimizing managerial practices, treating service users as customers with rights and expectations, decentralizing decisions on delivery mechanisms.
and modes, enhancing accountability for outcomes, and, of course, the perennial search for the ‘right’ organizational structures.

Governance theory became increasingly complex, as it moved beyond a ‘first wave’ with its focus on networks, to a ‘second wave’ of ‘metagovernance’ (see Jessop, 2011) in which the state seeks to secure ‘coordination in governance . . . [by] its use of negotiation, diplomacy and more informal modes of steering’ (Bevir and Rhodes, 2011: 206), and on to the ‘third wave’ of the ‘stateless state . . . a decentred approach [which] focuses on the social construction of patterns of rule through the ability of individuals to create meanings in action’ (ibid.: 209). Curiously, and slightly confusingly, one of the proponents of the deconstructed, decentred ‘third wave’ that has supposedly superseded the phases of governance in which networks and the ‘steering state’ existed also argues, separately, that networks and steering have a continuing currency in ‘global governance’ (‘the management of transnational issues by international organisations and other non-state actors as well as by sovereign states’ – Bevir and Hall, 2011: 352). Does the post-structuralist, postmodern, quasi-Foucaultian search for meaning in social constructs within a ‘stateless state’ apply only at national level?

Notwithstanding this, the novelty of governance as a fresh feature of public administration could be overstated. Arguably, ‘good governance’, in the specific, focused sense of proper decision-making procedures, recognized standards of conduct for politicians and officials, and robust mechanisms of accountability and control had always been a key element of sound public administration. The ubiquity of this application of the term has been noted:


For the United Nations (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2006) the eight key features of good governance were accountability, orientation in consensus, efficiency and effectiveness, equitability and inclusivity, participation, respect for the rule of law, responsiveness and transparency.

THE PERSISTENCE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Beyond this, even in the context of the wider application of the governance concept, to encapsulate the complex interdependencies of networks, some
analysts argued that the era of ‘traditional government’, with its emphasis on ‘rowing’ as well as ‘steering’, could be seen as something of an aberration, with the historical norm actually being much closer to the modern governance mode than might be assumed. Thus, for example, in the UK context, observers charting the renewed emphasis on governance in Whitehall in the late 1990s (Lowe and Rallings, 2000) noted that the role and functioning of government in the UK in the post-Second World War period could be viewed as an exception: the importance of networks and complex interactions between officials at different levels of the system of government, and across sectors, could be discerned in the public administration of the early part of the twentieth century, and was now being given renewed life.

Even in the context of the post-Second World War growth of the central state, it could be argued that the public administration systems this engendered were replete with examples of organizational innovation and working across complex networks. As one proponent of the values of bureaucracy within public administration has pointed out:

establishing the National Health Service, a new social security system, the expansion of education at all levels and the nationalization of the major public utilities could hardly be considered to lack the qualities of managerial initiative and enterprise. (Du Gay, 2005: 4)

The continuing importance and value of bureaucracy, as a feature of public administration can be used to place the NPM and governance developments in context. While it is ‘almost unimaginable for a politician . . . to stand for re-election on a pro-bureaucracy ticket’ and ‘contemporary public administrators found it very difficult to give voice to the values of Weberian public bureaucracy without appearing to be old fashioned, anachronistic and irrelevant’ (du Gay, 2005: 2), it can be argued that there has been a growing recognition of the risks associated in particular with NPM’s focus on specific, limited aspects of the challenges of governing and delivering services. Rhodes (1994: 151) had predicted some ‘returns to bureaucracy’:

Bureaucracies have demonstrable advantages, including reliability, predictability, probity, cohesion and continuity. Above all, they provide direct, hands-on control of services through the hierarchical, rule-based, disciplinary structure. These characteristics favour intervention. Should any future government rail against the constraints of fragmented service delivery systems and seek to steer, the tool it will turn to will be bureaucracy. A government with redistributive aims will have obvious incentives to intervene but if there is the potential for catastrophe then the political complexion of the government will be irrelevant. Needs must where the devil drives, and foundering service delivery systems carry a high electoral penalty.
Rhodes’s prediction became particularly apposite as governments searched for coordinated, joined-up approaches as means to overcome the challenges resulting from disaggregation and fragmentation. In some cases the value of bureaucracy was reasserted as coordinating mechanisms struggled with the task of asserting control and order over increasingly complex policy fields. There was a renewed interest in the policy contexts of bureaucracies, exemplified in the UK context by the work of Page and Jenkins (2005). Peters (2004) recognized the attraction for governments of the idea of ‘rebuilding the state’ and reasserting the values of centralism in a more traditional public administration framework. The dangers of an unthinking attempt to resurrect a supposed golden age were recognized, however. Taking an example of sound practice from Finland, where the 2004 ‘Government Programme’ system attempted to deploy a civil service reform programme as a means to reassert control over fragmented departments and create ‘horizontal governance’, Lodge and Kalitowski (2007: 29) identified a range of evidence of alternative approaches in which civil service systems are looking for ways to improve central governance capacity and to reassert some control and coherence over the state. The tricky part is to develop a strategy that does not simply see them returning to the status quo ante. A return to the . . . days of hierarchical and rigid government is not the answer. Nor, indeed, should the quest for greater coherence result in over-centralisation. Instead, civil services need to rethink the role of the centre and the part civil services should play.

The fluid nature of public administration can be illustrated with reference to the shifts over time between private and public sector ownership. In the UK context, for example, during the 30 years following the end of the Second World War, the iron and steel industry shifted from one sector to the other and back again. State ownership of the major public utilities was secured in the 1940s, but while the superficial impression might be that large elements of the former public sector were transferred permanently into the hands of the private sector during the 1980s and early 1990s, the reality was much more complex. The model of privatization deployed involved creating an enhanced role for government through the expansion in the numbers of regulatory agencies overseeing the former public utilities. As the sands continued to shift, UK Treasury civil servants found themselves involved in the running of new ‘nationalized industries’. Reflecting on the nationalization of the failing bank, Northern Rock, in February 2008, Simon Jenkins pointed to other examples in this countervailing trend:

Railtrack plc was nationalised by Labour as Network Rail in 2001 and the Tube firm Metronet was nationalised last year at a cost of £1.7 billion . . .
they were unequivocally private companies and they are now unequivocally nationalised enterprises. (Jenkins, 2008)

In the UK (and in other states facing the consequences of the post-2008 global financial meltdown), the move to large or majority government shareholding in banks and effective renationalization of rail routes in the face of financial crises and failed privatizations demonstrated that ‘returns to bureaucracy’ could and would happen at times of acute governmental and societal crises. Beyond this, in a demonstration of the inherent linkages between the concepts and paradigms, as we note below when citing the work of Pierre and Rothstein (2011), there is some evidence to suggest that early, Weberian forms of public administration, with their emphasis on rules and hierarchies, can be important (but all too often ignored) foundations for the successful implementation of NPM reforms.

THE DANGERS OF ASSUMED UBIQUITY

When discussing changes to the meaning and understanding of public administration, it is important to stress that caution is required in making assumptions about the broad or even universal application of the changes falling under the headings of public management and governance. It is also sensible to exercise some caution in relation to the degree of intentionality behind such changes. Analysts have emphasized the key roles played by elites in public service reform processes. The composition of the elites (broadly defined as political executives and senior officials) may alter, they are often influenced by external factors (‘ideas’ and ‘pressures’, including, in recent times, globalization and the international financial crises), and their plans are subject to unintended consequences and distortions during implementation within the structures and substructures of the political system. However, reform ‘tends to begin in the upper, rather than the lower reaches of governance’ (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011: 33). Citing the work of Goodin (1996) on the theory of institutional design, Pollitt and Bouckaert argue that:

it is the exception rather than the rule for reform schemes to be comprehensive, even in intent. Reformers try to improve this or that institution or programme, or sometimes a whole sector (health, education), but they seldom attempt to remodel the entire sweep of public sector institutions in one go. (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011: 34)

This is debatable, however, as it might be argued that, for example, in the UK the Blair administration’s ‘Modernising Government’ programme
represented an attempt (albeit flawed) to produce a sector-wide blueprint for reform (Prime Minister Blair, 1999), and the post-2010 UK coalition government’s Open Public Services White Paper (HM Government, 2011) was a similar (and arguably similarly flawed – see Painter, 2013) attempt to provide an overarching statement of intent. Even where there is no comprehensive plan per se, there is usually at the minimum a broad guiding outlook or philosophy. None the less, as Pollitt and Bouckaert rightly point out,

it is easy to exaggerate the degree of intentionality in many reforms . . . although . . . intentional acts of institutional redesign have been crucial . . . this should not be read as an elevation of organizational elites into God-like designers who are routinely able to realize bold and broad schemes of improvement. (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011: 34)

As the NPM and governance ideas spread, particularly during the third developmental phase discussed above, claims of ubiquity, occasionally accompanied by understated qualifying statements, became increasingly common. For example, Karmarck (2003) argued that the degree of global convergence with NPM norms was remarkable, and the publications of the OECD (see, e.g., 2005) appeared at times to assume a universal applicability for the tenets of NPM.

For Kettl (2000), public management reform was a worldwide phenomenon of ‘revolutionary’ proportions, while Lodge and Kalitowski (2007: 5) explicitly connected civil service reform programmes to what they saw as the global influence of NPM and modernization. Drawing on his work as Director General of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences, Duggett (2007: 19) was convinced that NPM and its associated ‘modernization’ and reform agendas had come by the 1990s to represent ‘a kind of global debate where a theory . . . was in fact being tested’. Duggett further argued that a subsequent reaction against NPM orthodoxies in the early 2000s saw the concept subjected to ‘a full-frontal assault . . . launched by a wide range of scholars and practitioners’ (ibid.). He believed that this process had led to agreement on a new ‘way forward’ that was taking the form of ‘contextualized’ NPM, geared to local circumstances and needs.

Notwithstanding this, another group of analysts (see, e.g., Kickert, 1997; Pollitt, 2001; 2007; Pollitt and Bouckhart, 2011) challenged the case that NPM and ‘modernization’ had ubiquitous status. They argued that there had never been a single ‘NPM model’, and the design and implementation of governmental reforms across the globe during the 1990s and after were characterized by significant degrees of variation. Developing this argument, Massey (2007: 20) pointed out that ‘the near-universal acceptance of “new public management” was never as universal or as accepted
as Michael Duggett . . . suggests’. Bevir and Rhodes (2003: 83) focused on limitations to the spread of NPM and pointed out its lack of coherence and consistency:

the similarities in NPM are superficial, masking significant underlying differences. The trend to NPM is not universal. Rather, traditional public administration persists in places such as the EU Commission and Germany. What is more, the aims and results of NPM differ. In Britain, NPM aimed to create the minimalist state. In Denmark, it aimed to protect the state. The language of NPM obscures differences; for example, NPM covers agencification in Britain but not in Australia . . . Several of the individual parts of NPM are not new: for example, performance measurement. The distinctiveness of NPM could lie in the package not the parts, but there is no uniform, agreed package. Finally, the meaning of NPM has changed; for example, in Britain the early focus was on cost-cutting and efficiency but later the main concern was for the consumer.

Pollitt had been sceptical about the claimed universality of NPM from the outset, and he re-emphasized his argument in 2002 (275–6, 277):

For some years now there has been a powerful story abroad. It tells that there is something new in the world of governance, termed ‘the New Public Management’, ‘reinvention’, re-engineering’ or given some equally dynamic title. This is generally presented as a formula for improving public administration . . . From this perspective particular governments or public services can be seen as being ‘well ahead’ or ‘lagging behind’ along what is basically a single route to reform. [But significant studies show] a world in which, although the broad aims of producing efficient, effective and responsive public services may have been widely shared, the mixtures of strategies, priorities, styles and methods adopted by different governments have varied very widely indeed.

In subsequent work, Pollitt also warned of the dangers of accepting a new orthodoxy – ‘contextualization’ as ‘the continuation of NPM with a few of the rough corners sanded down for those cultures where the pure form might cause too much abrasion’ (Pollitt, 2007: 22).

Agreeing in general terms with Pollitt’s critique, Massey (2007: 20) was none the less more sympathetic towards the idea of ‘contextualization’ provided it did not become a new dogma its own right: ‘in the modern, post-NPM world of public administration, there is no Stalinist one-size-fits-all; context is everything’. This approach chimed with the revisionist perspective of Christopher Hood. Moving on from his seminal early 1990s analysis of NPM (Hood, 1991), and revisiting his initial analysis of the concept (Hood, 1995), he was clear that the view that NPM was a global paradigm had been overstated.

The importance of avoiding assumptions of ubiquity and understanding the significance of contextualization can be seen even in those states that
were the early adopters of NPM. The nuanced nature of specific states’ embrace of public management can be seen in the UK context, where the period since the mid-1970s saw public service reform agendas driven by a confluence of ideas. In broad terms, it has been argued that these stemmed from three schools of thought (Chicago – Friedmanite; Austria – Hayekian; Virginia – public choice theorists including Niskanen), and formulated into the ‘reinvention’ of government around the practices of the NPM, which were, in turn, moulded during the 1990s and 2000s into a specifically UK reform context (described as ‘modernization’, and encapsulating within it new concepts of ‘governance’), which incorporated elements of European policy making and governance, as well as features of bureaucratic statism seen most obviously in the regimes of ‘performance targets’ (for a detailed discussion of these reform trajectories, see Massey and Pyper, 2005: 27–39). The post-2010 Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition has attempted to stake out new reform territory that would open public services to an increasingly varied range of providers and lead to a new configuration of relationships between the state and the networks of civil society and the free market, as an explicit reaction to the perceived bureaucratic centralism of New Labour (see HM Government, 2011). However, early analysis of this approach suggests that the ‘bottom–up narrative cannot disguise the fact that the Coalition partners were not averse to top–down hierarchical governance when politically expedient’, and there is evidence of reform synergies and continuities across the New Labour and Coalition periods framed around ‘a curious hybrid of bureaucratic control and market competition’ (Painter, 2013: 7; 15). Overall, therefore, this emphasizes the importance of avoiding over-sweeping generalizations about the adoption of ‘global phenomena’, and the need to look within states to identify the particular facets and features of public administration reform programmes.

Halligan’s comparative analysis (Halligan, 2011) of the ‘Anglo-Saxon countries’ (the UK, New Zealand, Australia and Canada) gives further emphasis to the importance of understanding the specific features and characteristics of reform processes within states. New Zealand’s approach from the 1980s gave particular emphasis to the deployment of executive agencies, but the challenges associated with, *inter alia*, fragmentation and variations in the quality of service delivery led to ‘system rebalancing’ by the 2000s, and NPM continued to be ‘adapted and modified’ while key features were retained (Halligan, 2011: 87–8). In Australia, the reform waves saw an embrace of managerialism, organizational decentralization, and then a move to an enhanced role for the centre within an ‘integrated governance’ approach (ibid.: 88–9). As with the other states, the Canadian experience was coloured by path dependency (particularly the historic mix
of the Westminster model and the influences from the USA), and in this case there was evidence of a less systematic approach to the implementation of managerial and structural reforms, with the result that there was greater opportunity for localized initiatives (ibid.: 89–91).

Halligan’s overview of the systems he examined indicates that there has been a move to more integrated forms of governance as a successor to the original brand of NPM, but the key NPM features, and particularly the performance management element, remain strong as the ‘divergence and convergence’ across the countries continues, amidst the ‘rediscovering’ of ‘old values’ (ibid.: 95). The latter we could see as referring to the continuing importance of public administration as the overarching paradigm.

Examining the experiences of a cluster of continental European states (France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Southern European countries collectively), Kickert (2011) also emphasizes the importance of history and constitutional arrangements in determining the nature and form of the varied approaches to public management reform. He argues that it is misleading to make claims of relative ‘success’ in the adoption of key elements of NPM by, on the one hand, the Anglo-Saxon countries, and, on the other, the continental Europeans. While the legalistic administrative systems of Germany, the tradition of the strong central state in France, and the overriding concerns with securing the democratic rule of law in the Southern states with relatively recent histories of dictatorship all meant that managerial reforms were placed in different contexts, this did not mean that the reforms did not take place, in one form or another. In some cases, the changes would be more obvious at the substate levels, and in all cases, the pace and shape of the reforms would be influenced by particular, specific circumstances (see Chapter 16). Similarly, generalizations about the experience of the Scandinavian countries are problematic. In Norway, Sweden and Denmark,

there are similarities but also many differences. Historical differences in the organization of central government, different administrative cultures, different challenges met at different points in time, as well as differences in political constituencies in power have all shaped public sector reforms in different ways. Each country has developed its own reform profile with different combinations of reform components. (Hansen, 2011: 129)

The very particular nature of the reform agenda in Denmark was captured by Greve (2006), who described the successive waves of public sector modernization initiatives launched by successive governments from the early 1980s onwards. These reform programmes featured the familiar themes of contracting out, privatization, deregulation, performance management and marketization. Structural reorganizations also featured as
part of the modernization drives, with the whole balance of responsibilities between central, regional and local government affected by the most recent reform. By the mid-2000s, the implementation of public management reform in Denmark was based on guidance and exhortation rather than formal power:

Because each ministry is headed by a cabinet minister, the responsibility for modernization lies with the individual minister in his or her own organization . . . The constitutional-based autonomy of each ministry means that the implementation of public management reform remains uneven as government departments to some extent are free to determine their own public management profile. (Greve, 2006: 167–8)

Looking beyond Europe, Australasia and the USA, NPM reforms designed to enhance drives to democratization, economic growth and modernized public services became key features of changing systems of public administration in developing countries. Turner’s (2006) analysis of reform in parts of Southeast Asia confirmed the significance of local circumstances in determining outcomes. From 1991 onwards, three states with a history of centralized government systems, the Philippines, Indonesia and Cambodia, successively embraced programmes of decentralization with the aim of improving service delivery (Turner, 2006: 265). These states had quite different experiences, however.

What is evident in all cases is that there has not been significant policy transfer in the initial design of decentralisation. Domestic policy actors have determined the structures of central–local relations and then invited eager donors to contribute funding and expertise to implement their designs. Donors strongly support decentralisation because of its association with good governance. (Ibid.: 270)

Interestingly, the external donors saw ‘decentralization’ as an understood, and inherently ‘good’, aspect of global NPM, while in practice the local interpretations of decentralization were based on a range of internal factors, including ‘culture, history, finance, time, the relative power of different political interests, the existing nature of subnational territories, ethnic diversity and the orientations and skills of the designers’ (ibid.). Once again, the local context was vitally important, and the results of the reform initiatives were ‘in large part determined by complex constellations of country-specific factors. There is no regional model and no coercive transfer of decentralisation policy. Indeed there is little if any policy transfer and certainly no copying or emulation’ (ibid.: 271).

This comparative analysis concluded that the decentralization programmes had improved the chances of citizens engaging with the
democratic process, and brought about some marginal improvements in service delivery systems. However, these improvements were limited, and decentralization could not be seen as ‘a magic bullet for service delivery’.

The conclusion of another analysis of Asian experiences also emphasizes the importance of scepticism regarding ubiquity, and a healthy respect for contextualization. Cheung’s account of the impact of NPM and governance on Asian countries sees responses in these states as

shaped by domestic conditions and institutional dynamics. Asian public sector reforms, even if donning imported NPM or ‘good governance’ clothing, or subscribing to the language and rhetoric of global reform fashions, are still essentially policy instruments to shore up and sustain the existing pro-state, and very often also pro-bureaucracy regime. The lack of a major ideological or paradigm break with the past means that governance reform or the reinvention of public administration is pursued only to the extent of preserving pre-existing interests and institutions. (Cheung, 2011: 143)

The continuing resonance of ‘traditional’ public administration and the importance of local contextualization are given further emphasis in the analysis of Pierre and Rothstein (2011). They note that the ‘good governance’ prescriptions of international organizations, including the World Bank, the European Union and the United Nations, are at their core ‘Weberianism-oriented’ because they stress the importance of, inter alia, ‘precise and unambiguous rules; merit-based recruitment; . . . public officials less susceptible to bribery; and a transparent system of responsibility’ (Pierre and Rothstein, 2011: 409). While recognizing that the Weberian model of public administration reflected an earlier developmental stage of the paradigm, during which it was important for trust to be built in institutions and public officials by creating a focus on responsible hierarchies, legal norms and impartiality, and effectively limiting the scope for significant discretion on the part of particular administrators, Pierre and Rothstein argue that the attempts by international bodies to steer developing and failed states down the path of NPM are inherently problematic. This is due to the emphasis within NPM on ‘decentralisation, managerial autonomy and clear separation of policy and operations’ (Pierre and Rothstein, 2011: 414), all of which can work effectively only if there is inherent trust in the system of government and public administration. It may be that NPM-style reforms can work only if they are layered upon a state that has as its modus operandi a Weberian understanding (universalism, impersonality, impartiality) of ‘how the state should behave’ (ibid.: 416).
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON SUB-CONCEPTS AND ‘NEW PARADIGMS’

Just as it might be argued that the ‘parent’, overarching paradigm of public administration spawned public management and governance, so the latter two can also be seen to have produced variants, sub-species and a series of sub-concepts. Occasionally, the proponents of these sub-concepts seem to be arguing that they are, in fact, new paradigms, which have superseded the extant regimes of thought and practice. Such claims should be treated with caution. The fundamental argument of this chapter has been that the overarching paradigm of public administration continues to resonate and have meaning even as, under its wide umbrella, the variants of public management and governance continue to evolve. Space does not allow us to discuss all of the sub-concepts, but it is possible to touch on some of them.

Stephen Osborne has argued that public management, or specifically NPM, ‘has actually been a transitory stage in the evolution from traditional public administration to . . . New Public Governance’ (Osborne, 2011: 417). He acknowledges the coexistence of these paradigms, and elements of overlap between them, but argues that there is sufficient evidence to support the case that ‘the time of NPM has . . . in fact been a relatively short-lived and transient one between the statist and bureaucratic tradition of PA and the embryonic and pluralist tradition of NPG’ (ibid.: 419). For Osborne, the key features of NPG are: ‘socio-political governance’; ‘public policy governance’; ‘administrative governance’; ‘contract governance’; and ‘network governance’ (ibid.: 421–2). This is effectively a synthesis of the various theoretical and conceptual perspectives that emerged within, and as offshoots from, public administration and public management. Osborne argues that NPG is ‘neither a normative new paradigm to supersede PA and NPM nor as “the one best way” [citing the work of Alford and Hughes] . . . rather it is . . . a conceptual tool with the potential to assist our understanding’ (ibid.: 420–21). Slightly confusingly, he then goes on to make the major claim that

from being an element within the PA and NPM regimes of public policy implementation and public services delivery, public governance has become a distinctive regime in its own right that captures the realities of public policy implementation and public services delivery within the plural and pluralist complexities of the state in the twenty-first century. (Ibid.: 422)

Successive waves of governance forms and types are deployed by Janet Newman (2011) as a means of imposing coherence and order on what she sees as the line of succession from public administration through NPM to governance. Thus she describes the regimes of ‘hierarchical’, ‘managerial’
and ‘network’ governance (Newman, 2011: 356–7) leading on to the challenge of ‘self-governance’, which is paradoxical in its political orientation, being associated both with the empowered discourse of public participation and with the responsible discourse: in offering empowerment it simultaneously responsibilises citizens to take action on their own (and others’) behalf rather than to rely on the state. (Ibid.: 357)

Within this, the ideas of empowerment and participation, previously examined by Newman in the context of a ‘remaking of the public sphere’ (Newman, 2005), provide a link to the concept of public value (see Moore, 1995; Bennington and Moore, 2011; Coats and Passmore, 2008), which incorporated within public administration and public management the strategic imperative to enhance value in a fashion similar to that found in the private sector, where the addition of ‘shareholder value’ is an intrinsic objective (although it should be noted that Newman’s work is not concerned with the public value concept per se). Moore’s work laid the foundations for the development of thinking and practice around the concept of public value. Within this, the importance of governments creating understandings of public values and value systems, responsible stewardship of public assets by public managers, and the incorporation of stakeholders within each stage of the policy process, all loom large (Burnham and Horton, 2013: 42 effectively summarize the key features of Moore’s prescription). The vision here is of a key role being performed by entrepreneurial public officials. Interestingly, this was a breed identified by Osborne and Gaebler (1992), which perhaps proves once again that there is nothing new under the sun. Critics of the public value concept (see, e.g., Rhodes and Wanna, 2007) have argued that the applicability of these ideas in the US context does not guarantee transferability to other public administration systems, where the political autonomy of public officials is more circumscribed. Notwithstanding this, public value has attained a certain currency, and Bennington and Moore (2011) have attempted to make the case for transferability across systems. Stripped down to its basic elements,

Public value argues that public services are distinctive because they are characterised by claims of rights by citizens to services that have been authorised and funded through some democratic process . . . It is designed to get public managers thinking about what is most valuable in the service that they run and to consider how effective management can make the service the best that it can be . . . engaging with citizens is not an exercise in giving the public what they want or slavishly following the dictates of public opinion polls. Public value offers a framework for how the information gathered using these processes should be used to improve the quality of the decisions that managers take. It
calls for a continuing dialogue or conversation between public managers and citizens. (Coats and Passmore, 2008: 4)

While it is clear that public value can represent a reasonable refinement and development of an evolving approach to public management and governance, there would appear to be nothing in this prescription, as set out above, that would fail to fit within a modernized approach to these concepts within the overarching paradigm of public administration. Public value itself certainly adds to our understanding of the complexities and challenges associated with modern public administration. It is not a successor paradigm in its own right.

It makes sense to view the ‘next-stage’ developmental issues for public administration and its component elements, including public management and governance, in terms of the particular challenges associated with the complications flowing from the need for enhanced integration and coordination of policy making and service delivery in a world of complex interdependencies, sometimes confused accountability lines, increased demands from citizens, and acute financial pressures. Is this a ‘post-NPM’ or ‘post-governance’ regime? Academics are particularly attached to the idea that an all-encapsulating title is needed to describe any particular developmental phase, although, as this chapter has tried to illustrate, there are serious pitfalls associated with the use of catch-all terminology. Perhaps the name we attach to this is less important than our attempts to grapple with the realities of the situation. Our present preoccupation with what Christensen and Lægreid (2011c) describe as the ‘whole of government’ reform movement (this might be broadly interpreted as encapsulating most if not all of the ‘post-NPM/governance’ trajectories) needs to be viewed in a longer-term perspective within which such movements can ‘gradually fade away and be supplemented or replaced by new reform initiatives’ (Christensen and Lægreid, 2011c: 403).

NOTE

REFERENCES


