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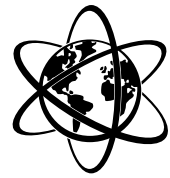

Responsive, responsible and respected government: towards a New Public Administration theory

Jocelyne Bourgon

Introduction

Public administrations are a vehicle for expressing the values and preferences of citizens, communities, and society as a whole. Some of these values and preferences are constant; others change as societies evolve. Periodically, one set of values comes to the fore, and its energy transforms the role of government and the practice of public administration.

Recent decades have been marked by tremendous change, both nationally and globally. Not surprisingly, public administrations are in a period of transition. Current practice of public administration draws key strengths from past models: the Classic model, with its emphasis on control and organizational design; the Neo-bureaucratic model, built upon rational decision-making processes; the Institutional model of the 1950s and 1960s, which was deeply rooted in behavioural sciences; and the Public Choice model, with its reliance on political economy (Denhardt, 2003).

In many ways, public administrations are pushing ahead. With one foot in the past, they are also eager to keep stride with – and indeed anticipate – the rapidly advancing sectors that will shape the future. Thus, the practice of public administration is no longer totally consistent with the Classic theory; nor is it yet supported by a 'new' and unifying philosophy.

This text aims to explore the rich tapestry of contemporary public administration, from a practitioner's perspective. Following the threads of academic theory and practical experience, it offers some of my 'best guesses' in relation to emerging trends and characteristics that will define innovative patterns and textures in this dynamic field.

I want to speak primarily of the need for a 'New Public Administration' theory, recognizing that to label anything 'new' is risky business. Those who embrace new ideas sometimes tend to regard earlier ways of thinking as old and outdated. In

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contrast, others are deeply wedded to long-held views and argue that there *is* nothing new.

I would offer a hypothesis that seeks to avoid both of these extremes. I suspect that everything that follows in this text already exists to varying degrees in public administrations around the world. In addition, I would remind readers that the factors I describe are relevant only to the tiny portion of the globe in which liberal democracy exists. Thus, I believe the 'newness' of a New Public Administration theory (if indeed newness exists) will not be found in new ideas, but rather 'in the way the fabric is woven, not necessarily in the threads that are used'. Or, as Frederickson (1980) says in his book on the *New Public Administration*, 'the newness may also be in the use of the fabric . . . however threadbare'.

The reference in this text to New Public Administration theory flows from the values that have guided traditional public administration. At the same time, it proceeds from the aggregation of new knowledge and new experience acquired over time – particularly during the 1980s and 1990s. It implies an expectation that a different set of values will come to predominate in the coming years. I think that we have seen the signs of change, and can begin to sketch the pattern of a 'new' and unifying theory for public administration.

One of the changes that deserves attention and action is the declining trust in government, which has been evident in recent years. Possible causes for this growing mistrust of elected officials and public servants – and potential consequences – are discussed briefly throughout the article. The concluding paragraphs highlight how a unifying theory for public administration could help to re-establish citizen trust in public administration.

That said, I will not attempt to describe such a theory: such an endeavour would be beyond my means and my ability. Rather, I would be content if this overview convinces some readers of the need to provide public servants with a set of guiding principles that could help to shape citizens' expectations and steer future government action.

Part 1: Not entirely of the past; not yet of the future

Societies around the globe have undergone tremendous change in the past thirty years. Since the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, we have witnessed an unprecedented convergence towards a 'Democratic Capitalism model' (Fukuyama, 1992) as the most efficient way to enjoy both a high standard of living and quality of life. (Another model, that of 'Monopolistic Capitalism', may be emerging in countries such as China and Saudi Arabia but that is another story for another day (Minc, 2004).) This convergence has occurred during a period of great economic and geopolitical transformation. This is evidenced in the effects of globalization and the emergence of new global economic engines such as China and India, in the exceptional transformation of South Africa and the expansion of the European Union, and in the impact of modern information and communication technologies.

We have come to realize the importance of good governance and to recognize the interconnected roles of the private sector, the public sector and civil society institutions. We have learned that good governance requires good government –

i.e. an effective public service and effective public sector institutions (Bourgon, 2003).

The Classic model of public administration theory was first described in the early twentieth century. Given the relative 'youth' of many democratic governments during that era, its emphasis on control and organizational design was well suited to the times. Public administrations moulded around this model have proven remarkably stable, even in the face of change and in highly variable circumstances. But the test of a strong theory is not just its staying power. It is the trait of resilience that implies an ability to adapt to new and unforeseen circumstances.

The past thirty years mark a rich period of experimentation in public service reforms. Many countries, including most of the developed countries, have undertaken extensive reforms aimed at making government more efficient, more effective, more productive, more transparent and more responsive. The quest to achieve these goals has been pursued through privatization, deregulation, commercialization, customerization or decentralization. Now looking back, we are better able to identify the positive initiatives that show lasting potential – and to discard the less successful ventures that had a negative effect on the ethos of the public service.

I would argue that the insight we can now exercise creates the right context for developing a new synthesis of public administration theory. It also establishes an ambitious goal. We should aim to define a theory that can effectively integrate past strengths, current knowledge and future challenges. That is, a theory that builds upon the strong foundation provided by the Classic model, incorporates the lessons of the last thirty years, and anticipates the imperatives of public service in the twenty-first century.

The Classic public administration theory

Civil service bureaucracies emerged in the latter part of the nineteenth century, a period characterized by rapid change associated with the industrial revolution. A meritorious, well-trained public service was a powerful instrument for promoting economic development and building a modern state: it contributed immeasurably to the success of countries undergoing industrialization (Bresser-Pereira, 2005).

The Classic model was founded upon a number of conventions, including a strict separation of political and professional activities, public service anonymity and political neutrality. The public service was governed by precisely prescribed rules and accountable to elected officials: thus, it was expected to exercise minimal discretion in executing its tasks. The power structure was vertical and hierarchical. It valued and encouraged impartiality, compliance and predictability (Kernaghan, 2002).

The public service, as we know it today, owes much to the public administration theory that prevailed at the beginning of the twentieth century including:

- Respect for the rule of law.
- A commitment to serving the public good.
- An expectation that public servants will exhibit integrity, probity and impartiality in serving the public trust.

The model was clear and simple – characteristics that continue to hold great intellectual appeal. Reality, however, is rarely as simple as theory. The Classic model falls

short of being able to coherently address an increasing number of issues that reflect today's reality. I want to examine, in turn, three significant issues:

- The need for flexibility.
- The interactions between politics and policies.
- New forms of accountability.

The need for flexibility The public administration theory of the early twentieth century was particularly well suited to repetitive and predictable tasks that guaranteed equality of treatment under the law.

In the 1950s, many countries realized that some public goods, because of their complexity, required more flexibility than the Classic model could offer. This need for greater flexibility first led to an 'organizational response' which was characterized by the proliferation of state enterprises and crown corporations. (The creation of agencies, which in the mind of some is associated with the New Public Management theory, originated much earlier.)

As society became more complex, the need for greater flexibility continued to grow. In the 1980s, legislators responded by creating framework legislation that ensured the certainty and clarity of the law yet allowed greater flexibility through the use of delegation and regulatory instruments. The nature of the service provided is not set in the law, rather it derives from the use of delegated power and discretionary decisions within the mandate of the organization and the broad parameters of the framework legislation.

Today, a growing proportion of the services provided by government are 'knowledge based' – i.e. they involve the gathering, processing, analysis and interpretation of information. These services are not repetitive and cannot easily be codified, much less prescribed. They require a high level of discretion. In many instances, the service provided results from the interaction between the service recipient (the citizen) and the public servant providing the service. The quality of the service provided depends on a combination of factors, including the accumulated knowledge, know-how and expertise of the public servant.

The Classic model, which originally sought to reduce discretion, does not accommodate the high level of individual decision-making required in today's world. Thus, it does not provide practitioners with adequate guidance for the tasks they must carry out. Nor does it tell us how to integrate higher levels of discretion and reasonable risk-taking in balance with the necessities of sustaining accountability, ensuring the fair treatment of citizens and avoiding the risks of arbitrariness.

The absence of a clear intellectual framework to guide the increased discretion needed in today's reality can lead to an erosion of trust in government. Without clear guiding principles, mistakes will, inevitably, be made. Typically this leads to finger pointing and to new layers of control. A unifying philosophy is needed to help guide the decisions of public servants and thereby reduce the risks of serious misunderstandings – or their consequences.

Politics and policies One of the fundamental principles of the Classic public administration theory holds that politicians make policy decisions, which public servants

execute. This separation of politics and policies is necessary for several reasons. One is to prevent political interference in the implementation of public policies as a means of avoiding corruption and patronage. As an equally important counterbalance, this approach prevents government by bureaucracy, which would undermine democracy.

Once again, reality is more complex. In practice, the separation of policy and politics has always been difficult. Depending on one's interpretation, it may even be undesirable.

Public policies are much more than the simple affirmation of political will – they are the means by which we strive to achieve a desired public policy outcome. In today's world, the search for the best public policy options often involves an increasingly complex process of interactions inside and outside government. Political will is in no way diminished through this dialogue. The final decision still rests with elected officials who decide whether a new policy is deserving of public support and initiatives deserve to form part of the government agenda. Ergo, the competent professional advice acquired through the broader interaction strengthens political will. Through experience, we have come to see that this approach increases the likelihood of success, reduces the risks of unintended consequences and facilitates implementation.

Public servants play a critical role in this process. They have a fundamental responsibility to contribute to robust policy analysis, to identify viable policy options and to assess the impact of various policy choices. Within these functions, they are called upon to 'speak truth to power' and to provide 'fearless advice' – thus the role of public servants realizes its true meaning through this interaction with elected officials engaged in the difficult process of policy formulation (Bourgon, 1997a).

The public policy issues of the twenty-first century are increasingly complex and will require even more interaction including:

- Interactions among public servants in local, national and international organizations – to exchange information and to marshal the best available evidence in support of policy decisions.
- Interactions between public servants and elected officials at all levels – to consider the impact of alternative policy options.
- Interactions between elected officials and citizens who are claiming a larger voice in the policy decisions that will most affect them in the future.

The public policy role of government is of fundamental importance to the performance of countries and the well-being of citizens. The policy advisory role is one of the most complex and challenging functions performed by a professional, non-partisan public service. I believe that this role has not received the attention it deserves.

A New Public Administration theory is needed to guide the necessary interactions amongst citizens, civil society, public servants and elected officials. Such a theory should help us to advance harmoniously from a concept of 'separation' to one of 'democratic interaction' and greater integration, rooted in greater understanding of and respect for the respective roles of elected officials and administrators.

New forms of accountability We have seen tremendous pressure for change in the areas of accountability and responsibility in public administration. They are highly complex issues that reach deep into our perceptions of the public service.

According to the Classic theory, elected officials are solely responsible and accountable for translating public will into policy. In countries such as Canada, ministerial responsibility implies that ministers answer to and be held accountable to the Parliament for everything and everyone under their watch. This holds true regardless of whether or not ministers are personally involved in any particular aspect of the work within their department.

Public service anonymity means that advice to ministers is given in confidence, thereby ensuring that the public debate focuses on ministerial decisions rather than the views of unelected advisors.

Ministerial responsibility would be better described as a 'system of accountability'. One aspect cannot be modified in isolation without ramifications for the functioning of the whole system.

Given the increased demand for accountability across all levels of government, there is a growing need to find a new balance between many conflicting lines of tension:

- Political accountability must be balanced against the growing demand for public scrutiny of the advice and personal actions of public servants.
- Parliamentary accountability for fulfilling the legislated mandate of public agencies and for the use of public funds must be balanced against growing costs (in money and time) associated with the ever-increasing number of controls and reporting requirements of central and oversight agencies.
- Hierarchical accountability must be balanced against shared responsibility for results among departments or across partnerships involving other governmental, non-governmental or community-based organizations.

Classic public administration theory was primarily interested in accountability of office holders as a means of controlling the exercise of power. This will not change. However, the ultimate aim of accountability is to ensure that governments are responsive to citizens. In this regard, traditional accountability measures are not entirely satisfactory and new forms of accountability are starting to emerge. I am thinking particularly of new forms of public accountability and new mechanisms for the oversight of professional responsibility.

A peer review system of the professional performance of public agencies is one avenue that could help to increase public scrutiny, enhance peer learning, and avoid politicization. Several countries, including Canada and the Nordic countries, are now experimenting with various forms of 'social accountability'. This entails reporting to citizens on a country's overall performance in key areas, as compared to other countries. It is a promising departure from the traditional discourse on accountability. The trend towards new forms of public and social accountability could prove central to our evolving democracies. Citizens today expect more from governments. They also want to have a more active role in governance – i.e. more than a chance for a limited say every four or five years at the election box.

Accountability involves complex legal, constitutional and democratic principles. At its most fundamental level, a 'new' synthesis should seek to balance political accountability for the exercise of power and public accountability for creating common

public goods and enhancing citizenship. Transparency and new forms of social accountability should be an essential part of New Public Administration theory.

The traditional public administration theory has given us a strong foundation. It is the undisputed basis into which the contributions of other areas of academic research, and the practical lessons learned of the past twenty years must be integrated.

The New Public Management theory

The New Public Management (NPM) theory takes its intellectual foundations from Public Choice theory, which looks at government from the standpoint of markets and productivity, and from Managerialism, which focuses on management approaches to achieve productivity gains. At its core, NPM represents a set of ideas, values and practices aimed at emulating private sector practices in the public sector.

NPM has both protagonists (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Osborne and Plastrik, 1997) and vehement opponents. It has been criticized for the values it promotes, the disaggregation of the concept of a unified public service and the effects of managerialism on democratic values (Terry, 1993; Carroll and Lynn, 1996).

At the risk of being unfair, I would say that while the Classic public administration theory gave us a sound foundation, the NPM theory starts from the wrong value proposition. However, the underlying issues NPM attempts to resolve – some of which had previously been neglected – deserve our careful attention. Three of the most important issues include:

- Citizen-centred services.
- Value for taxpayers' money.
- A responsive public service workforce.

A New Public Administration theory should help us to address these issues from a public sector perspective, based on public sector values.

Citizen-centred services The most fundamental characteristic of the public service should be its commitment to serve citizens in order to advance the public good. A public service true to its mission should be recognized for ongoing improvement of services and for its respect for the citizens it serves. It should be at the leading edge in exploring best practices, and should provide co-ordinated and integrated services among departments and agencies. In addition, it should use the power of modern information and communication technologies to enable citizens to reclaim their democratic institutions and to access government on their own terms and according to their needs. In a word, the public service should put citizens first although we all know that this is not always the case (Bourgon, 1998).

A citizen-centred approach to service delivery does not reduce the role of the citizen to that of a customer or a mere user of government services. Rather, it embraces a fuller recognition and affirmation of citizens' rights and of the breadth of their interests. A New Public Administration theory should help to reconcile the need for stability with the need to be responsive to citizens' needs and expectations.

Value for taxpayers' money Achieving value for money in serving the public good is not in conflict with public service values. On the contrary, NPM's focus on results and on assessing performance and impact is important and should be preserved. Every public sector organization should share a commitment to improving productivity. This is not a minimalist concept of the role of the State. It is a commitment to marshal all available public resources to effectively advance the public interest.

It is difficult for individual citizens to determine the quantity and quality of services that they should expect to receive in return for a given level of taxation. It is government's responsibility to provide citizens with comprehensive information. The benchmarking of public organizations that perform similar services is one way to provide citizens with the information they need to ask probing questions, to enrich the public discourse, and to hold government to account. Several governments have taken steps in this direction, one of the most common being the adoption of legislation that provides access to information. However, access to disaggregated information does not, in itself, lead to better understanding; nor is it a useful base for government public accountability for results. As a more promising thread, a New Public Administration theory could explore the right of citizens to know, and to understand, the consequences of government decisions.

A flexible public service workforce To better serve the public interest, government must be able to modernize its role and to respond to the changing needs of citizens. This is particularly true in a new global economy and society. Governments must be able to create new services. At the same time, they need mechanisms to withdraw from activities previously performed. We all know how difficult and how controversial this is, both in the public service and in the court of public opinion.

Public servants are 'especially responsible citizens who are fiduciaries for the citizenry as a whole' (Cooper, 1998). Because of their very special role in society, public servants are awarded special status and special protection. This special status was never intended to frustrate the will of the democratically elected governments or to place the corporatist interest of the public service above the collective interest it must serve. The privileges and protection help to ensure that public servants can withstand political pressures in performing their duties and resist the temptations of corruption. Such protections also enable them to provide 'fearless advice'.

The protection granted to public servants should be commensurate to their risk of being subjected to political influence, which varies considerably depending on their responsibilities and functions. Different countries have taken different approaches to creating a meritorious public service and protecting public servants. The creation, maintenance, and development of a meritorious non-partisan and professional public service does not, in itself, require guaranteed employment for life, guaranteed promotions, or upward mobility based on seniority. Nor should it preclude taking actions against poor performers.

A meritorious public service requires a clear legal framework and an independent oversight agency to protect the merit principle. It also requires inter-departmental mobility, diversity of experiences and a healthy merit-based competition system for promotion and advancement. The NPM solution was to replace the traditional

human resource management regime with contractual arrangements, performance pay and related performance management systems.

Personally, I do not believe that private sector practices are the way forward for the public service. In many ways, such approaches are foreign to public sector culture and values. Some people question whether these approaches have been effective in the private sector itself. Recent research conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) found no evidence that performance pay in the public sector has led to performance improvements (OECD, 2005).

In my opinion, two elements are needed if public administrations are to be sufficiently responsive to meet the needs of modern democratic societies: a frank debate and a new integration of the principles at play. Traditional bureaucracy has demonstrated capacity for stability – indeed, one might say 'ultra' stability. The success of the public service of the future will be its ability to balance continuity and change. Over the coming years, public administration should devote significant intellectual energy to the subject of change and responsiveness.

Part 2: The building blocks of a New Public Administration theory

In Part I, I noted a growing distance between the theoretical foundation provided by the public administration theory of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the reality faced by public servants in the twenty-first century. I also argued that, despite its best intentions, the NPM did not offer public servants an alternative model to help them resolve emerging conflicts and tensions. If anything, it added to the confusion (which is not entirely surprising in a change process).

The question of whether we need a 'new synthesis', a new 'integrating framework' or a new 'theory' of public administration is one of degree. As I was preparing these notes, I was struck by the considerable gap between modern concepts of government and those that held sway in the past. As a result, I became more concerned about the growing gap between the reality of those serving in the public service and the theory that, in principle, is there to guide them.

'There is nothing so practical as a good theory' (Lewin, 1951). I would add that there is nothing so dangerous as a theory that lags behind the times and yet remains the yardstick for making decisions and passing judgments.

Our concepts or understanding of situations shape the way we think and act. Concepts of citizenship, democracy or public interest have evolved over time and they are continuing to evolve. Consequently, the role of government and the role of the public service are being transformed in ways that push beyond the constraints of the Classic model.

A journey towards a New Public Administration theory must start at the most basic level. It begins with the concept of citizenship (Denhardt, 2003).

Citizenship

Citizen involvement was not a trademark of the public service of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Originally, 'citizenship'was used strictly in a legal sense – i.e. to define citizens as equal under the law. Over time, the term has taken on a

broader meaning. First, it took on an economic aspect (i.e. property rights or the right to dispose of assets), which helped to ensure a well-performing market economy. The concept later expanded to include a social dimension, i.e. it came to incorporate social rights such as health and education.

Today, we would readily agree that citizenship encompasses all of these dimensions and that citizens are more than constituents, voters, clients or customers (King and Stivers, 1998). I would argue that citizenship is the starting point of a New Public Administration theory.

Citizenship is considered an 'integrating' concept in that it helps individuals to reconcile their multiple roles in society. It recognizes that my interests as a parent, an employee or a member of my local community sometimes conflict. However, my role as a citizen extends beyond my conflicting self-interests and prompts me to consider the welfare of the community as a whole. Today's citizens examine and reconcile various kinds of individual and collective interests (Dagger, 1997).

Citizenship also helps to integrate individuals and communities. Individuals belong to many communities simultaneously. 'Families, work groups, churches, civic associations, social groups . . . help establish connections between individuals and the larger society. Collectively, these groups constitute a civil society in which people work out their personal interests in the context of community concerns' (Putnam, 2000).

In recent years, we have learned a great deal about the importance of civil society. In addition, we now have a better understanding of the importance of government's role in encouraging community building and civil society. Governments can contribute to social capital by encouraging citizen involvement in government activities that enrich both government and the community.

Many factors work in favour of greater citizen involvement. Greater involvement can lead to better policy decisions. It helps to ensure that government initiatives meet the needs of the greatest number of citizens – and increases the likelihood of successful implementation. Equally important, greater involvement enhances the legitimacy of government.

Figure 1 attempts to illustrate how the concept of citizenship has changed over time and will continue to evolve over the coming years (although it does not propose a pre-determined end point). Despite all the risks inherent in oversimplification, I believe that this figure is a useful reminder of the trends that are transforming the role of government in modern society.

As mentioned in the introductory paragraphs, much has been written about declining trust in government. One possible interpretation is the growing frustration of citizens who feel excluded by a political system that is becoming the reserve of professional politicians, powerful lobbyists and campaign managers (Mathews, 1994). Declining trust may also be a signal of declining support for 'power politics' that have been practiced in the past – and a growing demand for citizen engagement in policy debate, citizen involvement in government services and citizen participation in policy decisions. The 'politics of citizenship' is the 'politics of participation' . . . of ordinary citizens engaged in dialogue about the directions of society (Pranger, 1968).

In the past twenty years, we witnessed a sustained push towards a market model. It has not been entirely satisfactory. Over the next twenty years, developed

Figure 1 Towards a 'New' Public Administration theory: citizenship

Factors	From		Towards
Citizens	Legal being	→	Political being
Citizenship	Equal bearer of rights	→	Member of a social and political community including rights and responsibilities
Role of government	Representing citizen's interests	→	Promoting citizenship, public discussion and public integration

democracies will need a concept of citizenship that reconciles the 'economic man', the need for effective public institutions, and for proper checks and balances. We will need to integrate our concept of citizenship with the fact that we are becoming world citizens and that the threats to our well-being are no longer found solely within the borders of the nation-state. In this context, national citizenship and national governments assume even greater importance: they become the main instrument for exerting influence in the international community of nations (Ignatieff, 1995).

Public interest

The second concept I'd like to examine is that of 'public interest' – which has been alternately dismissed, applauded and, most recently, revived. Clarke Cochran (1974) gave us a schema of four different schools of thought on the subject, defined as normative, abolitionist, political process and consensualist.

For the normative group, public interest is an ethical standard for decision-making. The abolitionist school argues that public interest cannot be measured and, therefore, does not exist (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Towards a New Public Administration theory: the public interest

Factors	From		Towards
Public interest	The aggregation of individual interests The interplay of special interests	→	The common (or shared) interests of citizens
Role of government	To express the public will	→	To articulate and realize the public interest

The political process school refers to the mechanism through which policy is made. It is less concerned with 'what' decisions are made and more interested in 'who' decides and 'how'.

In the Classic model of public administration theory, the public interest is determined by elected officials: Their decisions amount to carrying out the 'public will'. Public administrators had no role in it, or to quote Woodrow Wilson: 'it [the public service] will have no taint of officialism . . .'. Citizens themselves had no direct role, other than by electing their representatives.

At one time, the prevailing view was that interest groups and political parties best represented the interests of citizens in the public policy process, and that the mediation between these views would approximate the public interest. Miller (1989) later argued that this school of thought turns liberal democracy 'on its head' because it replaces the public interest with the will of the winning coalition.

The consensualist school of thought views the public interest as a policy debate to achieve a public value consensus. The concept was developed further by the work of Paul Appleby (1950) and Deborah Stone (1997), and can be best described through direct quotation:

> The public interest is never merely the sum of all private interests . . . It is not wholly separate from citizens with many private interests; but it is something distinctive that arises within, among, apart from, and above private interests focusing on government some of the most elevated aspiration and deepest devotion of which human beings are capable (Appleby, 1950).

> It [public interest] 'is about communities trying to achieve something as communities . . . The concept of public interest is to the polis (the political community) what self-interest is to the market' (Stone, 1997: 18).

The way we perceive the public interest has profound ramifications for the role of government and the way public servants are expected to act. If we see the public interest as distinct from special interest, then the role of government is to help articulate and satisfy the public interest. It is to ensure that the public interest dominates in the solutions and in the processes by which public policy solutions are achieved.

The decline in trust referred to earlier may be due in part to a growing perception that elected officials and administrators are seeking to maximize their self-interest rather than to help articulate a shared vision for society (Ruscio, 1996). Coupled with a modernized concept of citizenship, a richer definition of the role of government in serving the public interest would provide the foundation for a New Public Administration theory.

Service to citizens

In the early days of public administration, service delivery (i.e. the implementation of public policies) was not considered a distinct function of government. It was the whole of public administration. The purpose of public agencies was to implement politically determined policies and programmes.

The process of policy implementation was top-down, hierarchical and unidirectional. Public agencies were expected to translate policy directives with as little

variation and as little discretion as possible. It was not a matter of using discretion responsibly but of avoiding it altogether by adhering to laws, procedures and directives. In this context, responsiveness was unnecessary.

The influence of scientific management led to an expectation that it would be possible to define the 'correct' procedures and to control clearly defined and predictable tasks.

It was not until the early 1970s that the service delivery function of government started to receive some attention. (The work of Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) is worthy of note.) We came to realize that the implementation process is a determinant of policy outcome, and that the institutional capacity to deliver is central to the design of policy options. In short, we learned that policy formulation and policy implementation are an integrated and interactive process of discussion involving both policy makers and administrators.

In the 1990s, the attention focused on new and different types of government services. This was largely the result of new modern information and communication technologies and the changing expectations of citizens. The 'new' services share a number of common characteristics:

- First, they are **knowledge based**, which means that the service provided depends on the accumulated knowledge of the organization and on the human capital of the people working for the organization.
- Second, they use a **holistic approach** to service delivery, which implies a 'whole-of-government' method involving multiple service agencies within a government or among levels of government. They also favour a holistic approach to citizens' needs, which implies addressing multiple demands, depending on the circumstances of service recipients.
- Third, they encourage **citizens' participation** in service design and delivery.

All of these changes can be seen, to varying degrees, in public administrations around the world. They have profound ramifications for the role of government and raise issues that merit inclusion in a New Public Administration theory. This gives rise to issues of accountability. It also entails a transformation of the interface between the political and administrative realms and of the relationships between the public service and citizens. Figure 3 summarizes this change and provides an initial impression of the magnitude of the change that has taken place in the implementation of public policies over the past thirty years.

In academia and in government, I have witnessed three types of reactions to the transformation of the role of government in service delivery. The first is to dismiss it as a fad or to think that 'this too shall pass'. The second is to oppose these changes on the grounds that they are not in keeping with the traditional principle of accountability. The third is to carefully, but vigorously, explore ways of making government more responsive to citizens' needs in the twenty-first century while ensuring fairness and adherence to the rule of law. I believe there is a tremendous opportunity to strengthen the role of government. I also believe that there is no turning back.

Figure 3 Towards a New Public Administration theory: implementation of public policy

Factors	From		Towards
Policy and implementation	Separation	→	Integration
Guiding principles	Compliance	→	Results within the law
Exercise of discretion	Rule based	→	Constrained by accountability
Criteria of success	Output	→	Outcome
Citizens	Non-interference	→	Participation/co-production

Public policy

Today, no government can claim to have all the tools or all the powers necessary to effect a complex policy outcome. Certainly, government is an important player, but one that must work with others to move society in a certain direction. Increasingly, government's role is to set the agenda, bring the appropriate players to the table, and facilitate and broker sustainable solutions to public problems.

The contemporary policy process is characterized by a dispersion of power and responsibility. There are many reasons for this: global markets have given rise to new issues of public concern that require global solutions; governments must increasingly work with other governments and many international organizations; and technology enables greater public access to the public policy process.

The dispersion of power combined with the capacity of modern information and communication technologies are at the root of the policy networks that have emerged as privileged arenas for public policy debates. In this context, it makes more and more sense to speak of governance:

> Governance can be defined as the traditions, institutions and processes that determine the exercise of power in society, including how decisions are made on issues of public concerns and how citizens are given voice in public decisions-making. Governance speaks to how society actually makes choices, allocates resources and creates shared values (Denhardt, 2003).

The OECD has studied various forms of citizens' involvement in policy development and defines the primary characteristics of three common approaches:

- **Information:** A one-way relationship in which governments provide information to citizens;
- **Consultation:** A two-way relationship in which citizens provide feedback to governments.
- **Active participation:** An ongoing exchange in which governments and citizens are involved in the content of policy making.

Figure 4 Towards a New Public Administration theory: public policy

Factors	From		Towards
Policy/Administration interface	Separation	→	Interaction
Public policy	The result of political decision process	→	The result of multiple interactions
Citizens' role	Compliance	→	Engagement
Role of government	Legislation	→	Deliberation

As the process of policy development changes, so do the roles of government, of elected officials and of public servants. Governments will continue to play the key role in setting the legal and political rules of governance, balancing interests, and ensuring that the principles of democracy and social justice are respected. In contrast, public servants are called upon to play new roles of facilitation, negotiation, and conflict resolution. These changes add complexity to the policy–administration relationship. (see Figure 4).

Conclusion: old threads and new fabric

In summary, let's look at how the two parts of my talk can be woven together. In Part 1, I examined the growing gap between theory and practice, which implies that public servants are left without the benefit of a modern and integrated theory to guide their actions. In Part 2, I noted that the intellectual foundations for a New Public Administration theory are more or less in place. These foundations derive from academic work on citizenship, governance, civil society, and trust in government. They also reflect the practice of public administration, such as the new reality of policy formulation and implementation.

As mentioned earlier, nothing is really 'new'. Each aspect mentioned in this presentation has previously been discussed elsewhere. A rich and abundant body of literature is available on any one of these issues. However, the field of public administration lacks a *unifying* set of values, themes and principles to express today's reality, as well as to inspire and assist public servants.

Allow me to pick out some specific 'threads' so I can begin 'weaving' them together.

A 'new' theory should start with the ideal of democratic citizenship. The public service derives its true meaning from its mandate to serve citizens to advance the public good. This is the raison d'être of the institution, the source of motivation and pride of all those who choose to make it their life, whether for a season or for an entire career.

Public administration seen from this perspective refocuses our attention on the ideals of democracy, the public interest, citizenship and human dignity, civic values, and commitment to service. These ideals are the starting point that defines the role of government, of elected officials and of professional public servants (Denhardt, 2003).

To be pragmatic public servants need a clear point of reference. In most countries (though not all), the constitutional law is the source of all powers and the authoritative basis for citizens' rights and responsibilities. It is above majority voting, above the laws creating public agencies and granting authorities to elected officials (Frederickson, 1991). Thus, it is a solid and reliable basis for action by public servants.

Starting from the concept of *democratic citizenship* opens up new perspectives. In this context, the role of public administrators cannot be reduced to simply responding to users' demand or carrying out orders. It involves:

- Building collaborative relationships with citizens and groups of citizens.
- Encouraging shared responsibilities.
- Disseminating information to elevate public discourse and foster a shared understanding of public issues.
- Seeking opportunities to involve citizens in government activities.

Democratic citizenship is not a concept wherein 'benevolent bureaucrats' substitute their superior wisdom for that of elected officials (Schubert, 1957). This concept recognizes that elected officials hold the ultimate responsibility for setting the agenda and making public choices. It also values the constitutional authority of the courts as the ultimate interpreter of the law. Democratic citizenship implies an interactive process in which public servants deal with citizens as citizens within the broader systems of political governance. It affirms public service values and clearly differentiates public administration from the market model.

Let me weave in a second thread. A New Public Administration theory would propose a *unifying vision of policy, politics and policy implementation* as one circular, integrated, and interactive process that brings together all relevant actors. This principle of active and democratic interactions would replace the doctrine of strict separation – a doctrine that has long been discredited but is still considered as a point of reference, particularly when things go wrong. The new theory would recognize the fact that both policy makers and administrators are *actively involved* in all aspects of policy research, policy development and policy implementation. It would help elected officials and professional civil servants act responsibly, ethically and in accordance with democratic principles. It would also recognize that, in the twenty-first century, discretion is necessary in policy implementation and, thus, would help to explore how the exercise of discretion could be informed by citizens' choices and participation. Finally, the new theory would help to address the issue of professional responsibility and accountability.

In seeking to address all of these individual issues, the new theory would effectively take on the difficult task of proposing a *unified doctrine of accountability* that encompasses the full range of professional, legal, political and democratic responsibilities.

In recent years, both elected officials and public administrators have been reaching out to citizens and exploring various forms of engagement, including use of the Internet. The underlying message to citizens is that 'having a say' does not mean 'having a vote'. The new theory would therefore seek to better reconcile the government's commitment to citizens' participation with its own role in establishing the legal and political rules of engagement, setting the agenda, and making the final decisions. In essence, the new theory would help to reconcile the role of responsible public administrators and the democratic responsibility of elected officials.

Public administrators are neither masters nor mercenaries. They are professional individuals who serve the functions of analysts, managers, facilitators, moral leaders, and stewards of public values and are called upon to be responsible actors in a complex system of governance. It is a demanding, challenging and sometimes heroic endeavour involving accountability, adherence to the law, judgement and responsibility (Denhardt, 2003). A strong theory reduces the need for heroism by showing the way and guiding one's steps. Public administration theory should help public servants fully exercise their multi-faceted role.

In closing, and in further pursuing the analogy of the weaver, I would remind readers that even the most complex tapestry is created by combining warp (vertical) and woof (horizontal) threads. In the context of the public service, I would propose that *trust* is the warp thread – the thread that gives the fabric its shape and sturdiness.

At the most basic level, citizens expect their government to be legitimate, honest and responsible: in a word, to be trustworthy. They expect government to respect democratic principles, abide by the rule of law and serve the collective interest. As taxpayers, they expect value for money, efficiency and responsiveness. They expect public servants to abide by high ethical standards and to carry out their duties with competence and integrity.

Trust in government, in public institutions and in the fairness of government decisions is the ultimate test of good government. It is the frame on which the multitude of threads representing various aspects of government and society can be interwoven to create a pattern that reflects reality. Trust is both a pre-condition for, and the result of, government actions. Maintaining public trust between governments and citizens is an essential element of democracy and a prerequisite for good government. It is also a constant 'work in progress'.

Signs of declining trust should never be taken lightly: no country is rich enough to afford the cost of distrust. Declining trust in existing public institutions leads to a lower rate of compliance, corruption, black markets, more tax avoidance strategies and increasing litigation costs (Tyler, 2001). Disaffected citizens may stop participating in public affairs. Eventually, it leads to the erosion of the social fabric (Levi, 1996; Fukuyama, 1995). Declining trust of elected officials in the professional civil service may be less visible but is also corrosive. It leads to increasing external controls, the higher costs of which divert money from service delivery to internal processes. It may also deprive elected officials of the best advice on policy decisions. Ultimately, it leads to growing dissatisfaction among citizens and public servants. Declining trust in an incumbent government reduces the scope for new public initiatives, particularly when benefits are not equally shared or will only materialise in the mid to long term (Hetherington, 2001).

The most common outcome of declining trust is a democratic change of government.

However, if the declining trust applies to both government and to institutions, rather than a single political party or an individual, it may lead to social conflict and ultimately to an overthrow of government and a return to military rule, dictatorship or civil war.

We have seen the growing signs of disenchantment. Decades of reforms to make governments more efficient and transparent have clearly fallen short of enhancing public trust. Decades of pressure to reduce the role of the State have not generated more trust, a greater sense of security or greater citizen satisfaction.

The current discontent signals the need to reconcile, yet again, freedom in the private sphere with collective deliberation over common values in the collective sphere. I would argue that we are in a better position than ever before to tackle this challenge. Everything that has taken place to date has been part of a learning process. Everything that lies ahead of us will be part of a journey of discovery for there is no end to our quest for better governance (Werner, 2003). I believe that the time is ripe for a New Public Administration theory that is adapted to the dilemmas and challenges of governance in the twenty-first century.

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