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New Public Governance

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Without Abstract

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Definition

New public governance is a new paradigm including a set of doctrines and approaches aimed at promoting “common good” by incorporating “public values” across the political system. It attempts to theorize about complex “decision making” spaces and enlarged “gaps” between formalized, hierarchical “tiers” of regulatory government jurisdictions and informal, unregulated connections, linkages, and inter-relationships. The paradigm facilitates an understanding of inter-connections, inter-dependencies, interactions between complex issues and across multiple boundaries, to reach agreement between diverse stakeholders influencing what constitutes “public value.”

Introduction

Key characteristics, components, and underpinning doctrines of NPG can be connected to other public service paradigms, networks, collaboration, co-production, leadership, and other concepts, and scholars have drawn from political science and governmentality literatures, augmented with management science theories to move the intellectual debate on from Traditional Public Administration (TPA) and New Public Management (NPM) doctrines. NPG emerged from a long-standing debate regarding the role and size of government, and while ideas underpinning NPM partly addressed concerns with an emphasis on efficiency, they did not address the larger challenges

of declining government resources, growing size of government agencies, and the complex, developing linkages between state, nonstate and civic institutions to deliver public goods and services. NPG has been adopted both theoretically and practically to seek explanations for decision making in gaps between formalized, hierarchical “tiers” of regulatory government jurisdictions and informal, unregulated connections, linkages, inter-relationships, and spheres of influence between a plurality of actors (O’Flynn [2007](#); Alford [2002](#); Bovaird [2004](#); Bozeman [2002](#); Carmeli and Kemmet [2006](#); Hartley [2005](#); Hefetz and Warner [2004](#); Horner and Hazel [2005](#); Kelly et al. [2002](#); Moore [1994](#), [1995](#); Moore and Braga [2004](#); Pinnock [2006](#); Smith [2004](#); Smith et al. [2004](#); Stoker [2006](#)).

NPG represents a way of thinking which is postbureaucratic and postcompetitive and moves beyond the narrow market versus government failure approaches so dominant in the NPM era (Hefetz and Warner [2004](#)). It is, therefore, a new paradigm for thinking about government activity, policy making, and service delivery and has implications for public managers (O’Flynn [2007](#)). In this approach, public services are delivered by multiple, interdependent agencies and inter-organizational relational contracts governing the processes across boundaries and between diverse stakeholders to achieve public value (Benington and Moore [2011](#)). Resource allocation and decision making are negotiated between actors who share values, meanings and relationships, and power inequalities between stakeholders identified and meaningful policy and service outcomes are agreed.

Historical Background

Moore’s original formulation of Public Value (Moore [1995](#)) became associated with NPM, as a “Strategic Value Triangle” (SVT) was used to understand what citizens expect from public managers and how the pursuit of virtue could be incorporated into executive activities (Ongaro [2017](#)). His diagnostic framework satisfied three key tests: it (i) identified publicly valuable outcomes, (ii) mobilized authorization and had political sustainability and ongoing support, and (iii) was operationally and administratively feasible (Moore [2006](#): Introduction). Stoker extended Moore’s SVT with a “Collective Preferences” model, to include resolution of value conflicts, because although strategic implementation was important, it failed to deal with how public managers reflect on available intervention choices and actions or build the necessary networks for delivery (Stoker [2006](#)).

Osborne then extended both Moore and Stoker’s ideas on public value creation by drawing from several other strands of research on public management reform (Pollitt and Bouckaert [2011](#)), pluralist approaches to network theory and New Public Services (NPS) (Denhart and Denhart [2000](#)) to arrive at NPG (Osborne [2010](#)). Intended as a set of doctrines holding both explanatory power (how public services work) and a normative stance (how they ought to work for the common good) NPG explained how public servants help citizens, communities, and civil society to articulate and share interests. NPG was also influenced by ideas on whole systems government (Benington and Hartley [2009](#)) and the need for motivated and entrepreneurial public officials, other practitioners, and think tanks (Singapore Global Centre for Public Service Excellence). Torfing ([2012](#)) asserted that NPG supplemented, but did not replace traditional bureaucratic skills, and was distinguishable from meta-governance, a combination of three different styles of governance (hierarchical, network, and market governance) in which public managers shift between and integrate different levels to design and manage public actions (Meuleman [2008](#)).

Key Issues

NPG (and how public value is created) is highly contested territory (Liddle [2012](#), [2018](#)), and many prominent scholars have challenged Moore's definitions (and those of later scholars) for their normative and empirical reasoning; loose definition of what constitutes public management; inability to understand the regulatory activity of states or power relationships between state officials and other agents; primacy afforded to entrepreneurial managers in shaping policies; down-grading of party politics; and deference to private sector management models that omit accountability and democratic politics.

It was also challenged for its antecedents derived from existing theories of governance; thus, Bevir ([2011](#)) called for greater distinction between its usage for theory, practice, or dilemma. In a more traditional sense, governance was focused on different theories of social coordination and patterns or rules to encourage people to act in certain ways in practicing governance, but the practice of governance creates dilemmas in the move from hierarchy and state into market and network approaches.

Although proponents of NPG consider it a new paradigm, others argued that it did not offer an all-encompassing theory of governance. Although NPG in particular stresses the importance of value conflicts and the fact that public managers may be central to these processes, successful resolution must align with democratically agreed values. This lack of a strong basis of distinct political identities that each partner embodies is ignored in NPG, in the pursuit of efficient and effective co-production and partnership working (Morgan and Shinn [2014](#)).

Similarly, NPG fails to adequately deal with the historical origins or contexts within which public issues arise on agendas; rather there is a narrow tactical and instrumental management concern for efficiency and effectiveness at the expense of understanding how public values become meaningful or enshrined in enduring public institutions (Moynihan [2014](#)). NPG also ignores the variable capacities that local state and nonstate agents and institutions possess to bring about the necessary change processes. Deliberative decision making is encouraged, but a question remains as to how well public agents have been trained in deliberative and consultative methods of engaging other actors (Vogelsang-Coombs [2014](#)).

For Stoker ([2006](#)), unlike TPA or NPM, NPG is most suited to networked forms of governance, with dialogue and exchange between agents at core, rather than sole reliance on rules and incentives to drive public service practice and reform. Relationship building, mutual respect, and shared learning are key aspects of managing the inter-relationships within networks. However, this harmonious view of human nature downplays politics and conflicts, and how to balance competing values of efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness with other political values. Rather than being a summation of individual user or producer preferences, public value is collectively built through deliberation involving elected and appointed government officials and other key stakeholders (Stoker [2006](#)). The achievement of public value depends on deliberative actions chosen in a reflexive manner from a range of intervention options that rely extensively on building and maintaining networks of provision. For public value management, the understanding of the public interest, public service ethos, the role of managers, and democratic processes stand in contrast to traditional public administration and NPM.

Moynihan ([2014](#)) suggests that advocates of NPG and value-oriented approaches to reform risk overestimating the novelty of the paradigm. In seeking to contrast with prior approaches (TPA or NPM), NPG is implausible as it has not been subjected to the decades of critical work leveled at earlier approaches. A historical-contextual approach could counter these criticisms, by looking to the

past for evidence of value creation in different eras. A plurality of inter-relationships between state, market, and civic institutions become the focal point for co-production and co-responsibility of public service delivery and production of public value. Relational forms of governance challenge the role of government in advanced democracies in the twenty-first century and raise questions on what type of institutions, organizational and leadership capacities are needed in future to synergize the state's own resources, capacities, and knowledge with those of the market and civic institutions.

Also, missing from NPG analyses is a focus on administrative techniques, contract management, community planning, collaborative governance and values of civic capacity, public benefits, equity, and size of government. NPG recasts public leaders from primarily instrumental agents of efficiency into governing agents with a sense of responsibility for the state, polity, and social, political and civic institutions that co-produce public good (Morgan and Cook [2014](#)). Public managers may be responsible for collecting values and making integrated responses across a very fragmented polity but cannot be measured by the same metrics that were used in NPM. The three Es of efficiency, effectiveness and economy (and by implication the focus on profit, market share, or return on investment) did not accommodate key elements such as fairness, equity, rights, and transparency which all become enshrined (or not) across the political and social system as agents engage and build up continuous interactions over time. NPG ignores the need for sustainable institutions over time, but relational forms of governance also challenge long-standing democratic principles such as accountability, regulation, legitimacy, and autonomy.

As social and economic objectives are achieved through inter-organizational networks, partnerships, and constellations of actors, the role of formal government is reduced, and its legitimacy and capacity to regulate weakened. However, the state's capacity to regulate does not entirely disappear under NPG, because the rule of law and processes and structures of authority are vital to preserve multiple values within the political system (Morgan and Cook [2014](#)). Fragmentation, complexity, and multiple goals mean that it is not feasible to measure activities in linear and reductionist ways by objective setting and achieving outcomes. Instead, performance is not singularly focused on efficiency or even customer-based criteria but more widely on commonly agreed (or potentially conflictual) values. In practical terms, NPG exemplifies deliberate attempts to change the structures and processes of public sector organizations in the pursuit of better performance, but changes to processes are many and varied.

International Perspectives

The restructuring of government agendas across Europe has led to a focus on relationships between state, nonstate/private, para-state agencies, and civic society to attain public value. Many governments have experimented with citizen engagement, innovation, and enterprise to add social and public value to services. NPG models are represented across European states with very different models of governance, leadership, visions, objectives, and strategies, and therein lies another huge problematic. There is a paucity of literature and lack of clarity on the extent to which NPG or creation of public value is distinctly applicable in European states, or whether it is an overarching approach that does not demand local adaptation and implementation. The differing administrative cultures, legal systems, and political traditions across continental Europe may mitigate against complete and wholesale adoption of such an approach. Bao et al. ([2013](#)) also stressed the need for NPG to include other global and cross-cultural perspectives.

In other countries with dissimilar cultures and traditions (such as Anglo-Saxon countries, Australia and New Zealand and African countries), there are studies of public value approaches from numerous disciplines, but the whole notion of virtue, public good, and the key question of where values arise from remain contested. From a constitutional perspective, in the USA scholars have shown that core values and legal principles of a political system need to be at the center of any analysis. Additionally, Jørgensen and Bozeman ([2002](#)) researched the topic of hierarchies of values, competing values or with indicative reasoning and through an approach that resembles casuistry, detecting examples, a contrario of where public values have been breached. According to Benington and Moore ([2011](#)), values are not seen in abstract terms, rather in material situations, technologies, politics, and daily practices and in extending earlier work show that we can only understand what adds value in the public sphere by identifying the long-term interests of future generations, rather than current practices. Thus, there is a shift in conceptualizing values as singularly held by individuals towards values as important plural entities with wider societal impacts. Current analyses of NPG differ hugely across international jurisdictions, and no one model prevails.

Future Directions

Theoretically NPG embodies a composite set of ideas and an amalgam of perspectives, models, and frameworks, drawn from varied and diverse political/government and management science literatures and research to distinguish them from earlier, all-encompassing theories of the role of government and the place of the public sector within state forms. Both TPA and NPM were very much theories of their time, representing as they did definite historical epochs; both were attempts at encapsulating the key characteristics and traits of a bureaucratic state undergoing change, though the latter was itself a composite set of ideas from many different perspectives. TPA was much easier to understand, given the antecedents of the Weberian, hierarchical, rigid, top-down, mechanical perspective of government. It was easier to distinguish how the roles of national and central government differed from the roles of the market and civic society. This mechanical machinery view of government with clear levers of power and chains of command was suited to an industrial age of standardized products and mass production.

NPG as a stimulus for entrepreneurial public managers working with plural actors across organizational boundaries to achieve public value for the common good and broader society is no longer limited to public managers and state officials. NPG therefore had some resonance and utility, but is fast becoming outdated as all types of nongovernmental and private organizations, beyond state architectures seek to address a multitude of “wicked issues,” create “public and social value,” and satisfy broader societal aims (Meynhardt [2019](#)). Complexity, turbulence, and rapidity of environmental shifts and varied environmental, economic, social, and political determinants of social problems render pure state actions incapable of solving ongoing, cross-boundary global problems (such as COVID 19, immigration, poverty, green issues). There is no longer “one” best solution to varied social problem, so combining public and social value for societal enhancement and reform means that characteristics, doctrines, and components of NPG serve as a good basis to explore other ways that organizations can take the lead in seeking solutions to some of the more urgent dilemmas of the twenty-first century. Across the globe, there are countless examples of charities, NGOs, voluntary and third sectors, commercial and business organizations and faith groups, police, health, and social services groups developing their own models of “social value,” so future NPG scholars

will need to widen their scope to combine existing understandings with emergent, novel approaches to explain reform processes.

Currently limited research exists on the key dimensions of social and public value; the relative importance different stakeholders place on vital changes needed; how enhanced service quality can achieve wider benefits for communities by addressing “wicked issues”; which stakeholders’ view prevail in any relational encounters; and how value is, or can be co-created, designed, delivered, and measured. “Value” creation is a very complex phenomenon, operating at multiple levels, and various attempts at monetizing the process have produced only partial success. Added to the need for new metrics to capture social and public value, the increasing use of digital and social media in complex encounters between state, nonstate, and civic institutions further complicate an already crowded theoretical and practical landscape. This creates an imperative to develop more nuanced and refined approaches to redefining the state, its purpose and functions, operations and management, in relation to nonstate agencies and actors.

Cross-References

- . [Collaborative Governance](#)
- . [Co-production of Public Services](#)
- . [New Public Management](#)
- . [Public Sphere](#)
- . [Public Value](#)

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