

SYMPOSIUM ON PUBLIC MANAGEMENT REFORM AND E-GOVERNMENT

L. R. Jones

INTRODUCTION

Among the issues debated presently by public management scholars and practitioners is whether the wave of New Public Management-oriented reform in nations around the world has passed the crest and is now in decline. It is difficult to generalize across nations and within nation states on this issue because the evidence is mixed. Alternative arguments are made by participants in this symposium to the effect that NPM (a) is in decline, (b) is still on the rise, (c) has entered the phase of implementation, which takes much longer and is more difficult to evaluate. Proponents of the third view indicate that the phase of political rhetoric and initial NPM program development is over in most contexts. Emphasis is now placed upon attempting to making changes instituted in the past decade work as intended to deliver results to meet the expectations articulated widely at the beginning of the reform era. Other issues related to why NPM developed as it has, and how it has been put into practice are articulated by participants in this dialogue. One issue given particular attention is the role and impact of e-government as a complement to or an integral part of NPM.

This symposium is the result of a spontaneous dialogue that followed the appearance of a short essay in the International Public Management Network (IPMN) Newsletter Number 1, 2001 issued on the IPMN list server on March 13, 2001. The essay is reproduced below, followed by the responses to it, lightly edited, in approximately (but not exactly)

the order they were received. A summary comment by Kuno Schedler is the last entry in the symposium and is followed by my own summary and conclusions.

ESSAY: PUBLIC MANAGEMENT REFORM: IS THE TIDE CHANGING?

Over the past year I have had the opportunity to visit, lecture and conduct research on public management reform and to meet, listen to and read the works of numerous authors writing about change in a number of nations including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, the Philippines, Russia, Switzerland, Thailand, and the UK. And I have tried to continue to pay attention to developments in the U.S. I am now writing about what I have learned for publication and I want to relay a few impressions gleaned from my research.

While comprehensive reform is still on the agenda in many nations (e.g., Thailand, Switzerland, Italy), the tide appears to have turned away from NPM-type implementation and towards critical assessment of the consequences and distributional effects of change both within government and governance systems and for the public and the economy (e.g., Australia, Brazil, Denmark, New Zealand, and to some extent everywhere). In some nations, reform efforts have been thwarted by a variety of barriers, mostly political but in some cases fiscal (e.g., Chile, Germany, Russia, Thailand and the USA). In some nations, reform continues but has entered into what appears to be a more "mature" phase of reassessment (Australia, Canada, Denmark, New Zealand, Finland, the UK). In some nations, a clear movement away from NPM-type reform has been taken (e.g., Chile, Brazil and perhaps New Zealand).

What is to be concluded about the continuing evolution of change in the public sector? It is difficult to generalize between and among nations and levels of government, but to me it appears that the tide has changed and the era of comprehensive experimentation with NPM-type reform is coming to a close in many parts of the world. In some nations, the reform wave has passed without much more impact than rhetoric and undelivered political promises. In other nations, lasting changes have been implemented that will not be easily reversed.

To quote the Bard (roughly from memory), "There is a tide in the affairs of men that, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. Omitted, all the voyages of their lives are bound in shallows and in misery. On such a sea we are afloat..." This is the perspective of frustrated NPM reformers. From a more moderate view, much change has occurred. However, we don't know much about the consequences of change. Another conclusion seems evident to me. One of the hottest topics in public management presently is networking and partnerships as strategies for coping with what Nancy Roberts (our Frieder Naschold Award winner for the Sydney IPMN conference) has termed "wicked problems" (Roberts, 2000). What wonderful research opportunity all of this presents to academics and other critical observers of government.

Larry Jones

IPMN Coordinator

RESPONSES: THE DIALOGUE

Comment # 1

I really appreciate your editorial. You make some excellent points about next-generation issues. I think you're dead on target. Two things have occurred to me.

First, public management reform isn't going away. The British elections are hung up right now on a question of public management--how to deal with hoof and mouth disease. They're also puzzling through the train crashes. In the US, we're seeing a mega-shakeout of the airline industry and the air traffic control system. I simply can't imagine that we'll stop worrying about reform. Even though [President] Bush doesn't seem to care much about REGO [reinventing government], he'll have to figure out what to do about the fact that half of the US federal workforce will be eligible to retire in the next five years; that he wants to pursue a different regulatory strategy; and that some kind of public management crisis will emerge that will demand his attention. There's no escape from management.

Second, the NPM reforms remind us that all public management reform is about politics. The reforms had their roots in political incentives; they became transformed as the political incentives transformed them. The leading-element reformers are each encountering different political problems right now, which in turn tends to reshape the reforms. The GPRA story in the US is really about whether/how GPRA gives elected officials traction on the issues they care about. The jury is out on that.

What this suggests is that we need to pay much more attention to the interaction of political/electoral institutions and administrative institutions/reforms. I think that's been the implicit argument that [Christopher] Pollitt has been making. What the next stage of the reforms might be is something we'll have to puzzle over. But at the very least, I think this suggests what the next stage of our research ought to be. Thanks for a provocative piece!

Donald F. Kettl

Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Comment # 2

Larry Jones sent a provocative Newsletter essay to all of us with a bright analysis of what seems to be going on at the moment in (past) reforming countries. Don Kettl, rightly in my view, stressed that reforms will never stop and that the latest problems that are arising will lead to further reform developments (maybe not, however, NPM type reforms). Let me add a brief view to these two as Larry cited Switzerland as one of the last countries that still tries to implement comprehensive NPM reforms. I will do this from the background of someone who is quite active in reform practice in Switzerland, Germany, and Austria - the German speaking parts of Europe.

In my view, the new public management has developed from a general, worldwide trend into localized and specific reform programs. The NPM has delivered a somewhat supply-driven concept of theories that led to a 'NPM tool-box.' Now, as with every tool-box,

some tools do make sense for the solution of your problem, some others do not. If you need to beat a nail into a wall, you will prefer to use the hammer rather than any other tool. On the long term, as your problems are not comprehensive but most often prioritized, you don't use all the tools; therefore the box does not look to be used comprehensively for a stranger who observes only the use of tools, not the box as a whole.

Could it be that Larry - and with him many other international observers – comes to a somewhat wrong conclusion when he writes that the NPM reform model is not a comprehensive model any more? I would rather argue that the NPM as a supply still remains comprehensive - but that practice at the demand side only uses those elements out of the NPM tool-box that fit to the specific problems that are most urgent for the respective countries. In this situation, the limits of case studies can be observed.

Examples:

- a. New Zealand had a financial problem, so they used the NPM to cut and manage costs in a first timely phase. The early observer could have thought that NPM was only about cost cutting.
- b. The UK had an ideological problem (Thatcherism), so they used the same – and some other - NPM elements to centralize and gain political power. The observer could have followed that NPM is only right-wing managerialism.
- c. Germany, Austria, and to a certain degree also Switzerland, had a problem of acceptance of bureaucracy among the citizens, so they are stressing the customer focus,

better service delivery, and so on. The observer could think that NPM is just customer orientation.

Unfortunately, I don't know about Brazil or Asian countries, but it seems to me that our research should try to understand more about these contextual influences on the specific use of the supply in reform methods and instruments that has been created by the NPM worldwide. I don't see NPM as a wave that is over - even if the term NPM might have lost some of its appeal to many of us.

For the next ten years, we will experience a new reform that will have a great impact on public administration: Electronic Government. We could argue that this is the new wave, or just another fad. If we do not understand that e-Government is not just technical, but has a NPM-type flip side of the coin, and that it can only be successful on the basis of changes which have occurred thanks to the NPM, we will fall in the same trap again: we will see it come and go, and we will be tempted to under-value what is going on in public management. Let's think about that.

Kuno Schedler

University of St. Gallen, Switzerland

Comment # 3

I agree with Kuno Schedler. Despite the efforts of some theorists, new public management is not disappearing within the ranks of governments around the world. If

anything it is getting stronger even in developing countries where there is a lot of interest in something other than the traditional bureaucratic model which has been regarded as a signal failure. Schedler argues that 'NPM as a supply still remains comprehensive – but that practice at the demand side only uses those elements out of the NPM tool box that fit to the specific problems that are most urgent for the respective countries'. This is evident in Australia as in other countries.

A key argument against the notion of an international movement is that different countries have implemented different changes at different times or for different reasons. This is a rather weak argument and does not disprove the notion of similarity. For example, Hood argued in 1995 that 'The Australian Commonwealth government resisted 'agentification' of its structure, on the grounds that it was dangerous to separate policy from execution, while New Zealand and the UK took exactly the opposite course'. The problem with this argument is that in fact all that was happening was that agentification was on its way, just slightly later. In a way that reinforces the point Hood is arguing against, the creation of service delivery agencies in Australia commenced a year after his article and is likely to approach the levels of the UK. The timetable need not be the same; the point is that the underlying principles and theories are the same.

Other points - reduction in public service conditions of service, program budgeting, accrual accounting and many others - were identical, although they did not take place at the same time in all countries. It is evident that the key theoretical changes - management rather than administration, a basis in economic theory, cuts in government function and

privatization, widespread use of contracts - have spread worldwide, even if the detailed reforms have varied. Arguments about the different pace of reform in some countries being evidence of an absence of a global paradigm ignore the fact that the underlying theoretical change towards markets and away from bureaucracy is the same, even if modified for local conditions.

It seems to me that what has been happening in the broader field of public administration is that for the past century we have seen a contest between bureaucracy and markets as has occurred in social science more generally. At some points, the one is pre-eminent, at other times the other has dominated. Since the early 1980s markets have dominated in the intellectual sense in the same way that bureaucracy did in the 1960s. One could go further and say that in reality markets and bureaucracy actually need each other to survive, but what the NPM movement has shown is that many of the functions of the early traditional bureaucracy can be performed by markets. And in an environment where bureaucracy as an organizing principle is in a weak position market solutions will be tried. Of course not all will succeed but that is the point. Governments will try solutions from the NPM toolbox and if they do not work will try something else. What we need more from the critics of NPM is more evidence of how and where traditional bureaucratic solutions work better than market ones.

Owen Hughes

Department of Management

Monash University, Australia

Comment # 4

I also agree with Schedler and Hughes. The issue is really about intensity of application of the NPM and not one of timing or sequencing per se. Many developing countries may have come to the NPM dance late but dance they did and the positive results are beginning to show. Their dance moves were designed to fit their music. That is, they used those elements of the NPM tool-box that were appropriate at some particular moment but they may very well end up using the entire tool-box. As a matter of fact, many developing countries already have.

Kempe Ronald Hope, Sr.

Director, Center of Specialization in Public Administration and Management (CESPAM)

University of Botswana

Comment # 5

In the ongoing discussion about the present state of reforms, one of the key issues is what experiences the countries using these reforms have had, whether they are done, that is, some kind of transformation took place, whether they were interrupted by parliamentary type shifts in support, or whether experience demonstrated that some of the reforms either didn't work or didn't work as intended. I probably haven't exhausted the alternatives.

In the U.S. as evidence begins to sift in from social scientists as opposed to publicists, about how the reforms have worked, one key element, contracting out, has had some results wildly different from expectations. Not only has some social service contracting

ended up costing more rather than less, but by turning over service delivery to not for profits skilled in lobbying for their survival and anxious to serve a particular clientele, the state lost its constraints on legislative lobbying -- the not for profits do it for them, and get the kind of services for their voiceless and sometime relatively helpless clientele that the states could not provide. Quality and cost increased. A new layer of bureaucracy was created, or possibly two, one in the government to supervise the contracts and assure compliance, one in the non profits to comply with all the new government regulations. Whether this is a good outcome or not, aggregately, depends on one's point of view, but it certainly was not what was predicted, even if it makes sense once observed. It may not be the end of the process either, as the non profits may find themselves more like conventional profit making businesses as they have to compete for contracts, cutting costs and providing shabby services not to make a profit but to fit within state requirements and contract provisions. Their advantages in terms of dedicated service delivery may vanish over time.

What we need to focus on now is evaluation information, what does it teach us about what works and what doesn't and under what circumstances, and what can we learn not only about reform but about government and contracting and customer orientation from these careful studies. And make sure that that information gets back into the channels where reform proposals are generated and implemented.

Irene S. Rubin

Public Administration Division

Northern Illinois University

Comment # 6

I thought that list serve members might find the following article from a recent edition of *Government Executive* re: the Bush Administration's plans interesting in light of the on-going conversation over NPM reforms.

Bob Durant

University of Baltimore

Government Executive, February 23, 2001

“OMB Chief Presses Outsourcing, Management Cuts”

By Brian Friel

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Leaders of federal agencies should plan to cut their management staff, expand outsourcing and advance e-government, Office of Management and Budget Director Mitchell Daniels said in a memorandum to agency chiefs. In the Feb. 14 memo, Daniels asked agency heads to set specific goals for those three areas as part of their fiscal 2002 performance plans, which are due to Congress when President Bush issues a detailed version of his 2002 budget on April 3. The performance plans are required each year by the 1993 Government Performance and Results Act.

"The President envisions a government that has a citizen-based focus, and is results-oriented and, where practicable, market-driven," Daniels said. Daniels laid out five major governmentwide management reforms to fulfill that vision:

De-layering management levels to streamline organizations.

Reducing erroneous payments to beneficiaries and other recipients of government funds.

Making greater use of performance-based contracts.

Expanding the application of online procurement and other e-government services and information.

Expanding A-76 competitions and making more accurate FAIR Act inventories.

"You should include a performance goal in your FY 2002 performance plan for every reform that will significantly enhance the administration and operation of your agency," Daniels said, adding that OMB would provide agency leaders with more specific guidance on the governmentwide reforms later.

The fifth reform that Daniels listed refers to OMB Circular A-76, which requires a competition between private firms and federal workers before any jobs are outsourced, with the work going to the lowest bidder. Agencies' 2000 Federal Activities Inventory Reform (FAIR) Act inventories listed about 850,000 federal jobs that could be subject to A-76 competitions. During his campaign, Bush suggested that as President he would require A-76 competitions for up to half of those jobs.

During the campaign, Bush pledged to reduce the government's management ranks by 40,000 positions through attrition and restructuring. He also promised to use the Internet to streamline government procurement and services to citizens. Most agencies submitted rough drafts of their 2002 performance plans to OMB last fall. Daniels instructed agency heads to revise those drafts to reflect the administration's priorities and budget plans.

Agencies' plans and budget materials "should reflect the focus on bringing about a better alignment of performance information and budget resources," Daniels said.

Daniels also instructed agencies to set goals for eliminating major management problems that plague their programs. The Forest Service and Defense Department, for example, have long struggled to get their financial houses in order. The Clinton administration instructed agencies to set such management reform goals, but a Senate Governmental Affairs Committee review last year found that only five of the 24 major federal agencies had established extensive measures for eliminating major management problems. Committee Chairman Sen. Fred Thompson, R-Tenn., recommended that OMB strongly push agencies to address longstanding problems in their performance plans.

By March 2, agency leaders must submit a set of key 2002 goals that OMB will include in the governmentwide performance plan, which will be included in Bush's budget and describe the most important management priorities for the new administration. Agencies must submit advance copies of their 2002 performance plans to OMB by mid-March and then send their final plans to Congress on or after April 3.

Virginia Thomas, a Heritage Foundation analyst who has focused on results-oriented management, said she would have preferred to see the governmentwide performance plan as part of the top-line budget preview that Bush will send to Congress next week. "I would like to see a lot of performance-related rhetoric as part of the budget documents," Thomas said.

Barry White, director of government performance projects for the Council For Excellence in Government, hailed the Daniels memo as "a signal to people who care about performance-related management that it's going to be important to this administration."

White said the memo sends a message to agency officials that performance plans should be an integral tool in managing federal programs, with leaders setting goals, seeing whether the goals are met, and then adjusting programs based on that information. Time will tell if Bush appointees actually use performance information to improve their programs, White said.

Daniels also sent a memo to agency heads urging them to comply with the March 1 deadline for completing their fiscal 2000 financial statements. Many federal financial office workers put in long hours each year trying to help their agencies reconcile their accounting books before the deadline.

Last year, only 15 of the 24 major federal agencies received clean opinions on their financial statements. Several of those agencies took months after the March 1 deadline to complete their statements and obtain clean audits.

Comment # 7

Just a few remarks on the NPM debate from a Swedish point of view.

1. It is surely true that all nations adopt their particular version of NPM and the contextual modeling of NPM tools is a continuously process. For example, several Swedish municipalities and state authorities started out with a list of NPM ideas but have later on integrated them with old institutional ideas. An interesting question is how and why specific nations develop their specific version of NPM (or other comprehensive philosophies). One answer, which Kuno Schedler proposed, is that it depends on the problems they are dealing with. Another answer is that it (also) depends on historical institutional factors (as Pollitt and Bouckaert suggest in their book “Public Management Reform. A Comparative Analysis, Oxford 2000). Perhaps this is an important research question: the relation between recognized problems and historical institutional factors in explaining how and why different nations have adopted NPM in different ways.

2. Another, which to me seems to be an important question, is if “bureaucracy” really has dominated in the same way in different countries? Could not “professionalism” also be considered as an important “paradigm” during the last 30 years? It differs from both “bureaucracy” and “market” in the way that it is focused on professional knowledge rather than bureaucratic rules or customer demands. Empirically we often find tensions between professional norms, for example within health care, and NPM oriented ideas of how to steer and control.

Finally, I would like to add a fourth “institutional arrangement” (beside market, bureaucracy and professionalism), namely “network”. In Sweden there is plenty of projects and reforms aiming to co-ordinate different kinds of resources from different

authorities and organizations (public and private). Sometimes this coordination is based on formal contracts, but sometimes based on trust and mutual understanding of actual social problems and challenges. Several books and articles have recently written about these issues, in terms of “network management” and the like, but it seems quite absent in the NPM literature. Wonder why?

Stig Montin

Novemus - School of Public Administration

Orebro University, Sweden

Comment # 8

Kuno Schedler refers to differences in problems and Stig Montin refers to institutional path-dependency. Hood, in his introduction to the IPMN in Sydney (Hood, 2000) talked about the 'public sector bargain' to show that politicians were supportive of reforms if it gave them more control (but not more responsibility) over the administrative machinery. But in the Danish case it is not so much the politicians as the ministerial departments (particularly Finance) which has launched and promoted stuff from the NPM tool-box. Could it be that the NPM tool-box in itself favors some problems over others, some actors over others who therefore have strong incentives to implement them? It seems to me that the discussion of power is just as absent as the discussion of networks. Wonder why too?

Lotte Jensen

Institute of Political Science,

University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Comment # 9

The absence of network analysis and political power analysis in new public management reflects its origins, I believe as a non sectoral policy analysis approach. That is, it is supposed to apply somehow to both public and private sectors, or take private sector solutions and apply them to government to a considerable extent as if there were no significant differences between them. As a result, the key differences between sectors, the urgency of creating networks and the omnipresence of political power are downplayed, if not completely ignored. Yet which reforms are picked, and which ones work may be a function of politics, power, networks, and ideology, including institutional power of the bureaucracy, professionalism, and parliamentary stability.

Fruitful lines of inquiry follow from adding back the differences between public and private, and then moving on to discussing the differences between governments. For example, one of the major differences between public and private at least in the abstract is the level of competition in the private sector, which is said to be a good that needs to be emulated, but one of the strengths of public sector and not for profits is that they can and often do cooperate, share knowledge, help each other help the client, customer, citizen. Even in nature, survival of the fittest, with brutal competition is not only NOT the only operating principle; it is offset by cooperative systems, such as group hunting among wolves. Apparently the whole group eats better when there is cooperation, rather than competition.

I don't see much value in insisting on viewing the NPM reforms as some kind of package deal, with a coherent ideology behind it. The parts are not necessarily coherent and may

in fact be contradictory. [President] Bush's plan to continuing to reduce staffing levels in the federal bureaucracy, after major reductions and before a major transition as a generation of bureaucrats nears retirement, is not likely to have any positive effect on improving bureaucratic performance. It is not a reform in that sense. It doesn't follow a diagnosis of what is wrong, or even where it is wrong. Providing more responsive government services and continually cutting staffing levels, regardless of agency performance, are contradictory.

Irene S. Rubin

Public Administration Division

Northern Illinois University

Comment # 10

I would like to make a comment on the IPMN dialogue about NPM. Background for these remarks are some initial thoughts why NPM-based reform initiatives develop different designs in specific countries. Allow me to refer to history to give some hints why NPM reforms have different target levels and issues:

1. Strong cities, weak kings and vice-versa

a) Path-dependency

(i): Nation building and state organization

Cities were extremely powerful and could develop transnational contacts during periods only, where central power was weak or absent. The rise of the Hanseatic League (from

1266 onwards) was exactly in the period called "Interregnum", where the Holy Roman Empire could not agree who should follow the Staufer dynasty that declined from 1245 onwards and ended 1268. Since 1100, cities had claimed more rights from their sovereigns and succeeded. The following emperor, Charles IV, confirmed their rights (1347-1378) but was confronted with a powerful League, in 1370 Denmark surrendered and the Hanseatic League dominated the whole Baltic Sea.

(ii): Municipal Rights

In Germany, two cities - independent from sovereigns - developed municipal charters that were exported throughout Eastern Europe, Bohemia, Estonia, Lithuania, etc. The cities kept power as they sent jurors to their "daughter right cities" in legal cases (also cases on relations and rights of local government and king). Their institutional influence started around 1200 and continued - in some countries - until the late 19th century (especially "German" cities in Eastern Europe).

b) Influence of Religion

The Protestant movement in the 16th century was very successful in those regions that were traditionally decentralized and that already developed strong and powerful cities. Protestantism allowed - in contrast to Catholicism - organization in local chapters rather than depending on Bishops and Rome and thus was in the interest of cities liberating from state/feudal control.

In all (Catholic) centralist states (e.g., Spain, Italy, Poland) with "weak" municipalities efforts in modernizing the state focus on the regional level and are state-driven, while in (Protestant) decentralized states (like Switzerland, Northern Germany, the Netherlands,

and also - with exemptions - the Nordic states) with "strong" municipalities efforts in modernizing "the state" focus on the local (municipal) level and are driven by local councils. It is even stronger, when municipalities provide a wide array of services.

2. Strong central power and institutional innovation

a) It is very interesting to see when the status, role and function of local governments were founded.

b) France invented its systems shortly after the French revolution under Napoleon and is still based on these principles of central control. Although France had also to create regions (due to the European Community, but not necessarily because France intended to do so), there was little change until the 80s, when France tried to delegate powers and liberate the lower tier of governments.

c) Prussia, after the Napoleonic era, underwent a tough modernization program, invented the classic ministries, announced peasants' freedom and created a basic law for local government in 1808 which principles are still alive today in Germany.

What we can see today is that some local government systems are regarded as old-fashioned and should be re-organized. It would be interesting to see whether they really change due to NPM-based reforms.

3. Scope of services and idea of local government/authorities

The fit of NPM-reforms in UK, NZ and Australia, and the difference between NPM-use east and west of the Mississippi in the US is a hint that Anglo-Saxon systems of local government - especially their scope of services - is relevant.

Those local governments provide mostly market-like, technical or infrastructure services, and less social and health services like in the Nordic Countries. I agree with Stig Montin that "networking" is at least relevant for Scandinavia (and NL, D, CH, and becomes more relevant for those countries in transition to regional entities). And Irene Rubin wrote, "The absence of network analysis and political power analysis in NPM reflects its origins" and thus, its limited fitting to specific state traditions.

Alexander Wegener

Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin (WZB), Germany

Comment # 11

Greetings and several comments. I do not believe that Brazil is letting go of NPM – just the contrary. There are many observers who support the view that after 1999/2000, the federal government has properly put more effort on the tools of NPM than in the period 1995-1998, where there was built a large body of supporting reference (theory) and new organizational formats in the public sector (e.g., agencies, quangos, etc.). In my opinion, these are distinct stages, all in the same direction: changing the perspective of bureaucrats and leadership in the public sector, who before focused on procedures and workload, toward results, contractualization of results within government and with other social

agents. I invite you to visit the website www.abrasil.gov.br (also in English, German and Spanish) to learn about what we are doing in Brazil.

In Brazil, change is taking place at the federal government level and in municipalities, some less ambitious and some more. Evidence of change is reflected in the large demand received by my agency, ENAP, from all parts of the country for assistance in development [of change initiatives] based on the principles and tools of the new public management within the past year.

On another point, I want to refer to the [consensus] of the Global Forum convened in Naples on e-government, and Kuno Schedler is quite right [about the importance of e-government], except for the conjugation of the verb: it is not “for the years to come,” it is already happening now, very quickly. There were 122 countries in Naples with the same consensus: e-government offers an immense opportunity to change the public sector, the organization of work, the relationship with citizens...euphoria, [but] it is already a reality. While we debate about reform over the past fifteen years, e-government has in less than two years swept the planet. See also the website www.globalforum.it

Regina Pacheco

President, ENAP, Brasil

[Ed note: ENAP is the agency responsible for reform planning and implementation as well as reform-related education and training for the federal government of Brazil. ENAP also provides services to employees of all levels of government in Brazil].

Comment # 12

Based on my assessment of what is happening around the world, and generalization here is risky and prone to misinterpretation, politicians have turned or are turning away from what have been identified as NPM-oriented reforms in many instances. As elections have changed governments, either ambitious reform initiatives have been set aside or reversed, or the emphasis has shifted, quite properly, to implementation as Perched suggests is taking place in Brazil. As compared with what? Out of office political parties normally disagree with the policies of those in power. If they win, they are expected to change things. While they do not usually change things as much as they say they will, some change is supposed to take place.

I have been impressed-surprised even-that public management reform has survived substantial political changes in governments as well as it has: New Zealand, Australia, Canada, US, UK and Portugal come to mind.

David Mathiasen

National Academy for Public Administration, USA

Comment # 13

I want to continue the dialogue on e-government a bit further by raising several issues, in particular to respond to contributions made by Kuno Schedler and Regina Pacheco. As noted in my previous message, I concur that the changes being wrought through

transition to e-government are significant. Web-based government information provision is status quo in many nations, e.g., see the web sites for cities in the U.S. These and similar sites provide all kinds of information to computer literate citizens about their governments. Some information on these sites is used by people who work in other parts of government or for other governments as well. Some web sites are restricted in their access to people working within specific organizations. Examples of the use of web sites abound. Thus, transparency has been increased and transaction costs for obtaining some types of information have been reduced vastly. For example, I can access the budgets for dozens of municipalities in the U.S. and elsewhere and, with the aid of census and other data, perform all kinds of comparative analysis showing spending by function or activity per capita and by other variables. Where data are provided for multiple years, I can derive trends and perform other longitudinal analysis. However, I am trained to do this by academic profession.

My question is: who actually uses the data that e-governments are providing, and for what purpose? I have already noted that access is limited to only those with computers and some degree of computer and, of course, general literacy. Some analytical skills also are necessary one presumes. But do we know who is using these data, how and (even) why? I can envision a day when municipalities might make their budgets not only available after they have been approved by city officials, but available prior to enactment to survey citizen spending preferences. I know of some experiments with this technique but I would like to know more. In Finland I learned that the national government has a plan to increase computer access and literacy tremendously over the next five years. In

some cases, entire communities are being "wired" and trained to use the computer for everything from shopping and reading the news to accessing community networks for social action. What are the implications of this and similar experiments?

I tend to wonder about the distributional issues raised in terms of access and skill levels demanded to become a "player" in the game. To use my budget example, who among the citizenry would be capable of voting their preferences for spending within an overall revenue constraint? Can people add when calculation and tradeoffs become complex? Also, I wonder whether there might be a tendency to expect too much from increased transparency beyond citizen limitations, e.g., as a result of the indifference or outright displeasure of public officials who might not want to increase participation of interest groups in competitive budget battles that officials formerly ruled outside of the public purview? In essence, do we expect too much from e-government in terms of enabling citizen participation, and in other ways?

Larry Jones

Naval Graduate University

Comment # 14

Larry raises important questions, and ones that have not yet been the subject of large-scale quantitative study, let alone on a cross-nationally comparable scale. Most of the studies that have been done and have been published are confined to municipal

programmes run in particular cities. They suggest that we are finding the usual biases that one would expect in take-up. However, the more important finding is that although initially, one can raise citizen interest and take-up of information by the power of novelty and - I suppose - a certain kind of Hawthorne effect, those levels of interest are not sustained, and numbers fall back and the composition of those who remain interested falls back to something not greatly larger than the group of those who would have been activists in any case. This has been traced for the well-known experiments in Santa Monica, Minnesota, Amsterdam, Bologna, Berlin and elsewhere. Those interested in those studies should look at Rosa Tsagarousianou and Damian Tambini's edited volume from a couple of years ago, or Anthony Wilhelm's more recent book, or the Brian Loader collection.

Maybe that's a depressing finding, but only if one believes that, in and of itself, reduction (by way of the technology) in the costs of securing ability to be a participant ought, fairly automatically, to increase willingness to do so. Never having believed that hypothesis to be very likely, I'm not too depressed. I think it simply reminds us that if we want to increase willingness to participate, then we ought to make the activity both more rewarding and more meaningful, rather than expect simple ready availability of information to do it for us. In any case, the finding is consistent with the results of experiments in on-line interactivity that long pre-date the net, such as the 1970s experiments with Qube.

That said, there are people around who would disagree, if only on a "not in my country" basis. I don't know if Paula Tiihonen is on this listserv? If so, I hope she will contribute. Paula is an academic public policy scholar who works as the principal research advisor to the Finnish Parliament's Committee for the Future (an interesting experiment in itself for political scientists to look at more closely for other reasons), and she is in Washington at the moment, and I know she has some much more encouraging data to report on public participation in Finnish e-democracy experiments. She would argue, if I understand her view correctly, that the technology (ability) is itself in some large part responsible for the high and apparently sustained levels of public interest (willingness). I suspect that if I knew more about the Finnish case, I'd look for the institutionalization of certain expectations about democratic life in that country's polity and society that would in any case sustain this, and which make the technology look more like opportunity, occasion, foil, arena or instrument to hand, that fundamental cause.

Larry raises the question of citizen willingness (and distribution of educational attainment necessary to exercise) to accept the full responsibility involved in making political judgments that involve hard choices, tough trade-offs between equally valued goals or resources, and implicitly he must be asking us whether this looks any different on-line from the way it does off-line. Well, I think we ought to be careful to distinguish ability to understand complex trade-offs as they are typically presented in most consultation exercises, ability to understand them as they might be presented were more imaginative and appropriate techniques used, willingness to accept that there are such trade-offs when levels of trust in politicians and salaried officials are trusted to present a problem honestly

and when they are not, and willingness to accept the terms of a presented problem when those officials are believed likely to take seriously what one says in response to a consultation and when they are not. I would hypothesize - and I know of no non-laboratory studies of real political consultation that control for all the right things to enable me to test this properly - that if we did distinguish those things empirically, and if one could control for differential access, the fact of a consultation being on-line rather than in a dusty community center hall on a wet Wednesday evening in November, would not make much difference.

Why do I say this? Well, first, there are plenty of anthropological studies of people's actual use of arithmetical calculation in context that show them making complex trade-offs and judgments in their purchasing, saving, weighing in the kitchen and the workshop, that they simply can't replicate using the formulaic systems taught in the classroom. So I am very doubtful that formal education in analytical abilities is the key issue here. The key issue is how choices are presented and how they are given context, meaning and - crucially - narrative connection to experience. Second, studies of political cynicism from a generation ago found that refusal to engage in trade-off reflected lack of faith that the hard choice presented was in fact necessary and instead a feeling that politicians had tacitly excluded another (perhaps better but politically risky) option, or else simply distrust in politicians willingness to make the use people wanted made of citizen input, was what was really behind the popular reluctance. The problem with the laboratory studies on citizens' political understanding (e.g., Lupia and McCubbins' work) is that, interesting as they are and revealing about the extent of cognitive capability, they

bracket out the trust and expectations problems in the very design of the laboratory setting. Third, I think far too much is made of the supposed change of norms of communication on-line, to a supposed culture of "flaming" and "stream of consciousness" writing or chat room talk, that supposedly inhibit rational discussion and willingness to deliberate responsibly about hard choices. This line of argument is terribly reminiscent of all that dreadful Levy-Bruhl stuff about the "mentalite primitive" - "it's their (online) culture that makes them illogical, you know". In practice, the norms of online communication are extremely varied, indeed as varied as offline culture, and generally derivative of offline culture in ways that make perfect sense once we see the particular derivations.

That brings me to Larry's final, and really important question, namely, what should be a reasonable set of expectations of e-democracy? I think I want to give an oblique answer to that. I think our reasonable expectations should be no different in any way from our expectations for our democracy, whatever channels we choose to use. I don't think that any of the social studies of the use of technology in the workplace (e.g. Orlikowska's work in CSCW) or among networks policy makers (e.g. the Dutton, Kraemer, Kling studies in the US) or any of the wider studies on social use of technologies, give us any reason to think that in and of itself, technology makes a relevant difference to what people want to do with their social and political relations. So, if it is true - and it's a big "if", and maybe it's getting bigger - that expectations are reasonably higher of the levels of citizens participation in decision making in, say, Finland or Australia, than they are in

more etatist France or Putin's Russia, and if those expectations are still reasonable ones for those countries, then those should be the expectations we should have on-line too.

Larry asks whether officials have an interest in limiting participation. I can't quite see what would count as a sound general answer to that question. Even the most etatist polities find that they need popular mobilization and legitimization for some decisions. Indeed, a scholar with a deep knowledge of the institution of "tyranny" in its proper sense, in the ancient world, would argue that the word "Even" at the beginning of that last sentence should be replaced by the word "Especially". That most officials sometimes, in some settings, for some policy problems, in some tight corners, will want to dampen down most kinds of popular participation is very old news indeed. That most will need, at least in even tighter corners, to raise the level of certain kinds of participation, is equally old news. In a sense, that was Aristotle's answer in "The Athenian Constitution" to Plato's "Republic", or, if you prefer, it's the later Lindblom's answer in "Inquiry and change" to the earlier Lindblom of "Muddling through".

My point is this: what Larry calls "indifference", whether online or offline, has to be organized, and "difference" disorganized, and it has to be channeled in particular directions and into particular forms, just as much as the same is true of participation. Digital technologies provide officials and citizens with new ways of doing this, just as newspapers and analogue broadcasting did. Contrary to the myth peddled by many of the digerati, neither of those technologies were nearly as unresponsively "one to many" as they like to claim, nor are digital systems intrinsically responsive or "many to many".

Technology is *not* as technology does, in politics. Rather, technologies are as politics subvert them.

So, in answer to Larry's question about the political and participation consequences of the wiring of whole communities, I'd answer that we should look to the kinds of politics already going on or now on offer in those communities, and only then look at who is trying to use the technology and for what. In itself, the kit isn't doing much. In every generation, technologies provide lightning rods for our fears and hopes about our social and political institutions. The more important issue is why the weather is producing so many electrical storms and what kinds of institutions we have. Asking whether a niftier rod will change the weather or the institutions doesn't seem to me a sensible approach for social science.

Perri 6

Director Designate, The Policy Programme

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King's College London

Comment # 15

In my view, e-government should be considered as something more complex than something more complex than only related to the issues of transparency and accountability. E-government should enable governments to produce different services

in a different way. E-government should contribute to change the mentality of public managers and politicians. Problems of access and training continue to exist but the perspective of the potential uses of e-government can be broader. Citizens could become more interested in the web if they could receive effective and fast service at home or in their office. A final consideration: very often the production of more information is a wonderful way to become less and not more transparent.

Riccardo Mussari

University of Siena

Comment # 16

For what it's worth, the consulting company Accenture has produced an analysis and rating of the world's governments on their e-government activities. They rank Canada as #1, followed by Singapore, the US, and Norway (See http://www.accenture.com/xd/xd.asp?it=enWeb&xd=industries\government\gove_study.xml). Like all rankings, this analysis is subject to debate and contest, but the analysis of key e-government strategies is interesting.

Donald F. Kettl

Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Comment # 17

As our recent chapter in the book resulting from the Sydney 2000 IPMN conference shows (Putterill and Speer, 2001), over a number of years of a NPM-based 'hands-off' policy stance, IS-related outcomes in New Zealand have been far from favorable.

It has been particularly challenging over the past two years for me to shift base to Singapore, another island nation with an approximately similar population. This has been a great opportunity to experience up-close the functioning of a highly 'wired-island', and to study unfolding EC developments.

As you are aware, Singapore is the 'odd man out' in some respects notably its non-NPM view of things, and very high focus on IS. The thrust of e-government here has been mostly in the direction of efficient service delivery on-line, rather than fostering citizen input into policy or resource allocation, as other countries are attempting to do.

Starting with such NZ -Singapore polarity as been very stimulating for me. In particular it has been a spur to study inhibitors to the adoption of EC. IT Government policy of leading from the front in IS/EC matters was rather shaken when a large 1999 survey of firms in Singapore showed participation in EC to be at a much lower rate than the policy setting had set out to achieve.

Clearly, the 'model' of the new EC environment and the roles of government, firms, and individuals is more complex than previously imagined. I'm pleased to say that after eighteen months analyzing actions and attitudes, good progress has been made in devising explanations for the participation puzzle. Incidentally, I have some confidence that this work will also help clarify some of the considerations raised since you pitched the first ball on the NPM/IS topic a few weeks ago. I would be very pleased to circulate recent papers on this study to any Network member with similar interests.

Larry, responding to your question about users of these systems, the answer is MANY Citizens, business people and tourists in Singapore now prefer doing their government business by 'riding the mouse' instead of standing in line. For access as well as literacy reasons, most service delivery are still dual, i.e., conducted at counters and on-line. Careful systems integration and resultant compatibility has also ensured that government departments can easily reach across and dip into the .gov information pool.

As you point out, e-gov. generates many issues to do with right of access, and capacity to do meaningful analysis. More material, faster access yes, but is the analysis 'better'? Do analysts understand the causal connections, and are they listening carefully to expressions of need or importance.

There a latent concern that the specification and design of new government IS/EC systems could be skewed/ corrupted by advisors within government afraid of a loss of

influence. As it is, large-scale government computer project failures seriously affect the quality and continuity of data.

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Perhaps, the case you raised of Finland, lying as it does in a policy sense somewhere between Singapore and NZ, could be used to fill in the many gaps in our understanding of EC/IT, this recent arguably important, pervasive, dynamic and counter-intuitive development.

Martin Putterill

University of Auckland, New Zealand

Comment # 18

The issue of citizen participation/collaboration in public policy, as a consequence of new information technology, is a critical one for us to examine. How about having a future IPMN conference or workshop devoted to it?

As networks are changing the governance landscape, so too is information technology. It facilitates and enables the creation of virtual policy networks that open up the policy process to more substantive citizen involvement. Whether one thinks of this as opportunity or a curse would be an important aspect to explore.

Nancy Roberts

Naval Graduate University

Comment # 19

I have been pondering on the discussion of e-governance. About 8 years ago I participated in a research project that took a 4 year look at the use of the Net's capabilities by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) -- especially environmental groups -- attempting to influence corporate, government and even international policy. This effort started at a time (circa 1992-1993 or so) when the www had not really come into being -- the web didn't really catch hold until late 1994 with the advent of the 80486 fast chip, 14,400 kb modems and graphic browsers. Previous www forays were mostly text-based and slow, though they did work.

Since our linear analysis crossed the threshold from pre-www to post-www, we were able to look really closely at how the whole milieu changed dramatically very quickly. It was clear at the time that the NGOs were light-years ahead of governmental groups in their grasping of the one fundamental characteristic of the Net that most government types seem to miss altogether. It's a self-organizing system -- a kind of "ordered anarchy" in which the participants rather quickly find ways to engineer around the State of the Art or Best Practices that academics and government personnel seem to find compelling.

What it means in operation is that it doesn't really much matter what the "official" groups want to do -- if the "Netizens" en masse (or even a significant group) don't like or find convenient or useful the way in which "official" information is promulgated, they'll just

come up with another way to deal with it. This is hardly a trivial matter and I think it does have some bearing on the e-government discussion at the outset.

Academics and bureaucrats (I am neither) tend to want to prescribe, rather than simply describe what's going on out in the "real" world." I think that drives some of the wishful thinking that occurs when seeking "Best Practices" -- there's a tacit belief that perhaps these practices will be copied elsewhere and become "standard" for other government agencies elsewhere interested in e-governance. That belief ought to be questioned, it seems to me, especially if it is likely to lead to some sort of premature closure on what really is a Best Practice. To be honest, I don't think that government agencies (or for that matter any agency on the private sector either) are all that capable of determining Best Practice approaches to the Net, nor can they assume with any confidence that their singular or even joint approaches will be followed at all.

The self-organizing and slightly anarchical structure of the Net itself suggests pretty strongly that any attempt to prescribe some specific approach to e-governance, even if only as a set of "Approved Recommendations" is likely to fail, not because of incompetence, or even simple error. It just isn't the way the Net works!

The other piece of this issue that goes beyond the self-organizing anarchy that is that the Net is the largely transitory nature of anything that occurs on it. Information comes and goes willy-nilly. Sites that are up one day are down the next, replaced with something else entirely. Even sites that remain are re-designed, new capacities added, new links

forged and old links dropped on an extremely rapid basis. As new broadband capabilities are added, data-intensive applications and interactive capabilities come rapidly to the fore, to be replaced quickly by "new" technologies in what appears to be an ever-accelerating product cycle.

It is probably a good idea to establish some sort of monitoring capability so that these changes may be identified and described as they occur (and it will take some considerable effort just to stay with them even with the best of intentions). However, I doubt the efficacy of any effort that would try to prescribe -- even in the broadest conceptual use of the term -- any Best Practice out there for anyone. What might be a Best Practice in one state, nation, demographic group or culture might well not be in another. What might work with one tacit set of technological capabilities and/or assumptions would probably not work in another.

At the moment, the information practices on the Net are a kind of linear experiment which has gone on in large scale only since late 1994. On the drawing boards are technological upgrades, improvements and fundamental changes that are going to leap matters forward once again, e.g., satellite-based Internet services for rural/remote areas. At the moment, DirectTV is marketing it mostly within the US rural communities. But this is broadband for "Everyman Everywhere," if taken even close to its capabilities. Could this make a difference in citizen participation in government? Yes -- certainly. What difference will it make? Who knows? The best we can do is to watch it closely and observe as it finds its own place in the cyber-structure that is still being built.

None of this is to say that it is incorrect or inappropriate to try to assess e-governance matters. Still, I think that the realistic assumptions of where such inquiry might focus need to be revisited in a larger frame of reference. On the Net, it doesn't really matter what "official" folks might want to do. Their clear obligation is to get the information out there where people can find it on a timely basis. But I doubt that any attempt to structure the method of interaction at this early stage is going to have much success. This is just not how the Net works and organizes itself.

Donald Homuth

Salem, Oregon USA

Comment # 20

THE TIDES OF NPM

I was interested by Larry Jones' Newsletter piece suggesting that the NPM international 'tide' may have turned. Whilst I have no reason to disagree with most of the substance of what Larry said (and, indeed, I have to confess zero knowledge of one or two of the countries he mentioned) I do think that a 'tide in, tide out' metaphor may be less than adequate as a characterization of international trends in public management reform. Let me propose just two reasons (there are others) why this might be so.

First, the tides in different parts of the world were never even remotely aligned. Many countries (e.g. the Nordics, France) picked selectively at the NPM menu but never swallowed, or even wanted to swallow, anything like the full feast. Others never got past the lightest of *hors d'oeuvres* - including major states such as Japan (until very recently),

Germany (at the federal level) and some of the Mediterranean countries. So there never was a time when NPM was a global enthusiasm, however much the Anglo-Saxons at OECD/PUMA and the World Bank may have wished it were so. [More detail to back up this claim is given in my book with Geert Bouckaert, Public Management Reform: a comparative analysis (Oxford University Press, 2000)].

Second, I would argue that public management scholars need to be fairly discriminating in their use of concepts such as tides, trends, trajectories, and so on. Management reform is usually quite a long drawn-out, multi-stage process with many a slip possible 'twixt cup and lip. In my own work I have begun to use a fourfold disaggregation, although I am sure more subtle categorizations are possible. I distinguish between trends in *talk*, trends in reform *decisions*, trends in actual organizational *practices*, and trends in the *results* of public management - the outputs and outcomes. My hypothesis is that there has often been much more convergence on NPM talk and high-level pro-NPM decisions than on NPM practices or measurable improvements in results. I also argue that our research needs to employ different tools to explore and assess each of these four stages in the process of reform.

Finally, one question that deserves an answer is what *else* has been going on, part from NPM? In a number of countries with which I am familiar there have been interesting reforms which do not really belong to the NPM menu at all (sometimes alongside NPM reforms). But who has investigated and characterized these? What names and categories do we have for them? Until more work along these lines is done we are in danger of

supposing that the NPM is the only show in town, because we have no developed vocabulary for other types of change.

Christopher Pollitt

Erasmus University Rotterdam

Comment # 21

[In response to Pollitt]

I appreciate your comments in reply to my essay. I accept your observations about the limitation of the tides metaphor. Metaphors are worth only so much – to make a general point in this case. Clearly, to me at least, NPM was adopted under various labels in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Switzerland (national and cantonal governments), Sweden, Brazil, and to a lesser extent in Chile, Denmark, Austria, some Lander governments in Germany, Canada and the US. It has been very influential in local and state government in the U.S. In fact, state governments in the U.S. may be the best examples of its persistence, e.g., privatization, contracting out, contracting out of social services, etc. Therefore, I believe my characterization of NPM as a tidal flow is accurate. However, I also stand by the point of my essay that the tide has turned in many, if not most, nations *THAT I HAVE STUDIED*. This caveat is important for two reasons: because we know that generalization is risky, and there are many venues that I have not attempted to study. My colleague Kuno Schedler insists that the tide still is in flow in Switzerland and to some extent in Australia where he is deeply involved in implementation of NPM-oriented reform initiatives. Likewise, my colleague Regina Pacheco in Brazil insists that NPM is alive and well, and under implementation in her

nation at all levels of government. So, onward we go with much evidence to examine in the next five years or so with respect to my essay hypothesis of NPM decline.

Again, thanks for your response.

Larry Jones

Naval Graduate University

Comment # 22

Thank you for this great and interesting discussion on our IPMN list server! Having read and digested the different contributions, I have the impression that there is a need for some feedback and maybe a further input to the debate.

Let me first summarize my impression of the discussion:

a. Maybe it is not a good idea to focus on the use of the term 'new public management' too strongly. For many countries, this actually has become a somewhat politically used (and misused) term. This means that the political system has politicized the term - which in turn will not allow newly elected governments and political enemies to support the running projects with this brand. I expect that we will experience, however, that many of the ideas will be supported under a new brand label.

b. As researchers (and theorists), we seem to be a bit impatient. Given that many of the countries mentioned in the discussion have only started with conceptualizing in the early

nineties, how can we expect the new model (or elements of it) to be successfully implemented and running in the administration's every-day life after this short period of time? How is the politico-administrative system to learn that quickly? My personal impression - supported by the quantitative empirical research we are doing at the moment – is that many bureaucrats are only beginning to realize what the new model could mean for their own work after several years of serious and consequent use. And the same seems to be true for politicians.

c. Parallel to what happens with customer orientation in the context with the new public management, Europe at least is also moving towards more citizen orientation by increasing democratic rights of the citizens (referenda, initiatives, votes). This clearly is a subject that is more interesting for politicians as it stems from and influences the political system directly.

d. It is no wonder that budget officials in many countries, when supporting E-Government as a new reform trend, are focussing on E-Voting and subjects linked to it like 'digital divide'. This might lead to the impression that - similar to what I wrote about NPM in terms of perceived problems and the consequences of tools used out of the “NPM tool-box.” E-Government is not only about E-Voting and elements of this family.

Our latest research results [in Switzerland and elsewhere in the region] suggest that we have to distinguish three elements of E-Government:

1. E-Democracy and Participation (eDP) stands for political opinion building and decision-making via electronic media. Examples include Internet voting (e-voting) and citizen networks.

2. Electronic Production Networks (ePN) are forms of cooperation between public and public, and public and private institutions via electronic media. Examples include outsourcing document renewals and e-procurement solutions.

3. Electronic Public Services (ePS) stands for the delivery of public services to benefit recipients, to private individuals, or to companies through local, regional, or national portals. Examples include electronic tax declaration and life event portals.

Each of these elements follows different trends and focuses on different aspects of life within the politico-administrative system. While eDP affects the political system, ePN will probably bear the greatest potential for efficiency increases. Finally, ePS will enable the administration to better deliver services to the customers. Thus, it becomes clear that at least ePN and ePS are following the same reform trend as the new public management.

Possible research questions for an international network therefore could be:

- On what element do governments all over the world put their emphasis when they spend public money for E-Government projects? Why are they doing this?

- Which reform elements of the type 'new public management' will further this movement, which of them will be hindering factors, and which are neutral?
- What can we learn from other disciplines in the context of the reform? It was already mentioned that networks (political science!) might be an interesting approach.
- My thesis is that E-Government will strongly support the implementation of NPM reforms, if handled wisely. What is the empirical evidence?

Public Management has been and will be a broad field of research. I don't see that NPM reforms or related movements have been stopped, though many elements have been adjusted to national needs and frameworks. E-Government is another opportunity to learn more about changes in the politico-administrative system. We should, however, not treat E-Government as the successor to NPM but as an additional interesting approach augmenting it.

Kuno Schedler

University of St. Gallen, Switzerland

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I appreciate the responses and dialogue that took place after I sent out the essay with my comments about reform in the IPMN Newsletter No. 1, 2001. Kettl made the point, in response, that management reform will continue, "...many management issues and problems cannot be ignored." Schedler then introduced the notion of NPM supply side tools adapting to circumstance...used where appropriate and not where they do not fit. His comments about how to evaluate NPM as a comprehensive reform, and the implications

of the sweeping e-government trend that may be viewed within the context of NPM reform are persuasive. Hughes contributed a strong statement in support of Schedler's analysis, i.e., that to say NPM has not been implemented broadly is a misperception and arguments over timing and pace of reform are not persuasive to indicate that NPM has not changed the way governments operate...with greater emphasis on markets and away from bureaucratic approaches to problem resolution. Hope pointed out that NPM is alive and under implementation in different phases in many developing nations. Hope noted that many developing countries may have come to the NPM dance late but, "...dance they have and positive results are beginning to show...they used those elements of the NPM tool-box that were appropriate at some particular moment but they may very well end up using the entire tool-box." Irene Rubin expressed views regarding how to evaluate reform and concerns about the wave of social service contracting...having produced many unanticipated consequences, some of which appear to be quite negative. Durant forwarded a piece by Friel on the emphasis of the Bush administration on results reporting within the provisions of GPRA and the intent of the administration to reduce the federal workforce, in part through more outsourcing, and placing more emphasis on performance in budget decision making. As Friel points out, the rhetoric is clear but it is the implementation that we must watch carefully. Montin contributed that NPM implementation depends on the nature of problems faced in different contexts and the importance of historical and institutional factors that influence reform. He asked whether bureaucracy dominates in the same ways in different nations. Montin stressed the importance of professionalism and networking to the progress of reform. Jensen noted that [Christopher] Hood emphasized at the IPMN conference in Sydney that politicians

appear to support reforms that they believe will enhance their influence and power, and that NPM empowers central agencies (the Finance Ministry in Denmark). As her published work demonstrates, central agencies know well how to manipulate the reform agenda to suit their aspirations to wield power over budgets and the reform agenda. Rubin noted in a second contribution the importance of differences in public and private sectors...in motivation as well as operation. Critically, she noted the importance of political power in its influence over the reform process. She resonated with Montin and others about the demonstrated value of cooperation in social problem solving. Rubin opined that NPM should not be assessed as a monolithic entity...a cohesive philosophy or approach to reform...which fits with Schedler's analysis of the NPM tool box that contains many implements used for specific purposes as appropriate to particular contexts. She added that if the Bush administration cuts staff in ways not related to performance then this approach does not make sense relative to much of what we all have learned about reforming public service. Wegener provided valuable historical context to the discussion of why NPM evolved in different ways across European nations. Pacheco explained that NPM reform in Brazil continues but in a different phase...emphasis is now on implementation whereas the previous agenda was oriented more to articulating the purposes and methods of change. She also noted a greater emphasis on results in this phase, and the revolutionary implications of e-government reforms, as cited by Schedler. Mathiasen responded that, "Based on my assessment of what is happening around the world, and generalization here is risky and prone to misinterpretation, politicians have turned or are turning away from what have been identified as NPM-oriented reforms in many instances." He also noted surprise that NPM had survived in other venues.

A substantial body of contributions then were made on the topic of e-government within the context of the reform debate, beginning with a set of questions posed by Jones in response to earlier contributions on this topic by Schedler and Pacheco. Perri 6, Mussari, Kettl, Putterill, Roberts and Homuth responded to the points raised by Jones and others. Several contributions suggested convening an IPMN event on the topic of e-government. I will not attempt to summarize the e-government dialogue because Kuno Schedler covered the salient points of this discourse in his summary comment. Pollitt and Jones then exchanged brief views on the issue of NPM adoption and evolution. Finally, Kuno Schedler provided an assessment of the principal conclusions he drew from the dialogue to conclude the symposium.

As noted, I am grateful for all of these responses and I apologize for any errors in interpretation of these comments. I agree with the emphasis on evaluating reform in the context of specific institutional settings and the relevance of historical factors in influencing how reform is encountered. I agree that NPM is a worldwide phenomenon and that it has had tremendous impact. And the importance of the e-government trend cannot be overstated. However, as Rubin pointed out, and as I stressed in my original comments, the use of political power is crucial in influencing the reform agenda.

Based on my assessment of what is happening around the world, and generalization here is risky and also prone to misinterpretation, as noted by Mathiasen, politicians in many nations have moved away from what scholars have identified as NPM-oriented reforms.

As elections have changed governments, either ambitious reform initiatives have been set aside or reversed, or the emphasis has shifted, quite properly, to implementation, as Pacheco suggested is taking place in Brazil. As Jensen pointed out with respect to Hood's comments at the IPMN 2000 conference in Sydney, politicians support what they believe will advantage them. Where public and political opinion has turned against reform [of the NPM variety or of other types, taking note of Pollitt's point] for whatever reasons, then politicians and the central agencies that serve them, respond to the change in the policy environment. And politicians always have agendas of their own that may not fit with the directions of previous reform, e.g., to combat corruption in Thailand.

Thus, in some nations, a repudiation of the previous reform agenda for all of its alleged evils has taken place. In other nations, more effort is placed results versus rhetoric. In many nations, rhetoric and a massive numbers of reports about what reform has intended to accomplish is about all that has been achieved. In other nations, reforms have taken root and are unlikely to be reversed.

The challenge to our profession is to determine what difference all of this has had on governments, governance, bureaucracy and markets, on service delivery quality, quantity, costs, etc., and on the distributional costs and benefits within societies and economies. We should not overlook that in developing nations in particular, similar to experience in developed nations such as the U.S., Australia, New Zealand and others, the success of government reform is often gauged based on the performance of the private economy. Often this is a mistake because it attributed too much influence to government reform and

not enough on market and private sector variables outside the control of government. However, there is a tendency for the public to hold governments, particularly past governments, responsible for consequences that are not related in any meaningful ways to reform, whether of the NPM variety or of other types.

Thanks again to all those who participated in the symposium. I expect the dialogue to continue within the IPMN community and among colleagues in a variety of venues.

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