

Innovative Governance: Trends and Challenges

New Public Management (NPM) was a real intellectual revolution according to Hood (1991) through its promotion of a new model of public governance (Osborne *et al.*, 2010). But how is this ‘intellectual revolution’ faring today? At first, NPM aimed in particular at integrating innovation by creating a closer link between public organizations and their users, or “customers”, and promoting the transformation of these organizations. Indeed, innovation is considered as the key element of good governance and promoted to cope with the bureaucratic issues. Innovation is perceived as an antidote against administration deficiencies, whereas it enables the construction of a new process and a collective capacity aiming at reducing non-desirable consequences that would otherwise result from bureaucratic problems.

The concept of innovation has spread around the world from the private sector to governments and public service organizations. It has increasingly become a leading topic in political and administrative discourse, and innovation is now widely seen as a promising driver of public service improvement (Damanpour and Schneider 2009; Walker 2006).

In contrast, this intellectual revolution introduced by NPM has created a heated debate on the real potential of innovation within modern governments rising from the awareness that current designs of public policy and implementation are likely to produce an alarming social and public value decline as well as administration shortcomings. This point is particularly relevant when considering the important role citizen trust in government plays in shaping not only accountability, but also citizen responses to innovation. All told, the complex relationship between innovative activity and public service performance is of great theoretical and practical interest.

This Special Issue of IPMR addresses multifaceted dimensions of innovation and governance, reflecting the diverse efforts and experiences of different societies in improving performance, accountability and sustainability. This Special Issue is based on selected papers presented in the IPMN-ESSCA conference of 2019. Those theoretical and empirical papers hailed from different countries in Europe, such as Germany and Poland, but also from Australia.

The first article, entitled “Supporting Innovative Business Development Through Innovative Governance in Poland”, written by Clay G. Wescott and Felix Oppong, is a practical paper based on the authors’ recent mission to Poland as part of a World Bank evaluation of the policy operation series (IEG 2019). It focuses on how a set of policy actions supported by the Polish Government promoted both innovation and competitiveness in Poland’s private businesses. It first studies the nature of the innovations initially implemented in Poland’s public sector that then found their way into the private sector, before examining the effectiveness of recently adopted government programs supported by the World Bank in encouraging increased business innovation and competitiveness.

The second one, “Sustainability as Ideology in the Collaborative Governance of the European Union” was written by Thomas Hoerber, Gabriel Weber and Ignazio Cabras. It investigates how ideas around sustainability have become dominant in the EU, using Marxian and post-Marxian perspectives. This paper demonstrates the influence of sustainability on the EU overall plan and point toward the rise of a new ideology based on

sustainability itself. The findings confirm sustainability as closely linked to other theoretical approaches, such as (eco)-Marxism, deep ecology, ecological modernization and, more recently, the green economy discourse.

The third one, “The Hazelwood Mine Fire 2014 -- Evidence of ‘organisational path dependency’ in public and private management” was written by Gwendoline (Wendy) Webber and Richard Webber. This paper examines the public management of the mine fire crisis that happened in the Hazelwood Power Station and Mine in the Latrobe Valley, Australia, when, on 9 February 2014, a large out-of-control brown coal fire broke out in the ‘open-cut’ mine adjacent to the Hazelwood Power Station. It uses the model of ‘organisational path dependency’ developed by Sydow, Schreyogg & Koch, (2005, 2009) in the context of an ‘inter-organisational path dependency’. This paper demonstrates how this catastrophe marked a watershed that changed public management in this sector from this point on as well as new ways created after the event. It identifies a major turning point and the sequence of events and decisions before and after the fire broke out.

The fourth one, “Integrated Steering and Coordination of Local Public Services in Germany – Reasons and Restrictions of an Innovative Governance Approach” was written by Benjamin Friedländer. In this paper, based on a qualitative empirical study, the author examines the idea of an integrated guidance and coordination at the local level in Germany while analysing reasons and constraints of its implementation. It eventually the lessons learnt from this situation and presents perspectives for other European countries for their local public sector reforms.

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IPMR The International Public Management Review (IPMR) is the electronic journal of the International Public Management Network (IPMN). All work published in IPMR is double blind reviewed according to standard academic journal procedures.

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