Editorial

30 years of *International Journal of Public Sector Management*: looking back and forward

This year, 2017, we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the *International Journal of Public Sector Management*. This issue therefore has a slightly different character than regular or special issues have: it consists of ten contributions by distinguished international expert scholars in the field of public management. They were asked to write an essay on what they consider important developments or remaining questions about public management over the past 30 years. This has led to an interesting and highly varying bundle of essays – with a number of common denominators as well. Eran Vigoda-Gadot has carefully mapped the academic development of public management ideas, themes and theories. The question remains however whether public management ideas like NPM originated in practice or in theory and this is exactly where Owen Hughes’ contribution picks up the debate: to which extent has there really been a change from public administration to public management? Is public administration as a discipline trendsetting and predicting future developments, or is only codifying and labelling what is going on in practice anyway? The relationship between academia and practice is important, although not always clear or intense, as Christopher Pollitt argues when he points out that public management as a discipline is in fact neglecting the most important questions of this time (read more to find out which ones these are!). And there is more criticism: Guy Peters concludes that public management scholars seem to have forgotten that public administration is also about governance and politics, while Sheila Kennedy stresses that the role of law and the Constitution seems to have disappeared from the discipline. Joyce Liddle (former editor of *IJPSTM*) adds to this the fact that the all-important link to teaching – to train the practitioners of the future – has been lost, at least in the UK but to most readers her contribution will provide some striking resemblance to their home country’s situation. All authors call for more attention to these aspects of public management.

But there are also contributions that stress the accomplishments in public management, both in theory and research. Per Laegreid shows how the Nordic, or more specifically Norwegian, public management community has flourished because, for example, scholars have always recognised the importance of politics, but also because of the open culture among practitioners to allow researchers access to the public domain. Tiina Randma-Liiv and Wolfgang Drechsler describe the development of public management as a discipline in the countries in Central Eastern Europe. Although success and failure are both found, both in practice as well as in academia, they paint an interesting picture of a diversifying school of public management scholars in these countries. Rather than a country perspective, Ewan Ferlie discusses one of the best-studied policy sectors in the field: healthcare. He shows that old and new reform paradigms are nowadays operating side by side. NPM reforms are still going strong, but new reforms such as digitalization and the use of governance networks are omnipresent as well. Lisa Blomgren Amsler and Rosemary O’Leary focus on one of those new reforms in their review of the state of the art in research on collaboration.

Together, the ten contributions give an overview of achievements, failures and ongoing discussions showing that there is still a world of things to do for public management scholars. *IJPSTM* aims to play an important role in the ongoing discussions by presenting high-quality research results. To do so, the editorial team will initiate a number of improvements to the journal’s profile and strategy. First, in cooperation with the publisher Emerald, we will adopt the Centre for Open Science’s Transparency and Openness
Promotion guidelines that ensure good ethical and methodological practices among scholars. Second, we will strive for indexation in the Web of Science list next to the listings already achieved such as Scopus. And third, the journal’s profile will be updated and requirements concerning the academic quality of manuscripts tightened. Together these measures will improve the quality and visibility of *IJPSM* further and move us up to *IJPSM 2.0.*

Over the past 30 years, more than 1,000 articles have appeared in this journal. In the first article of this issue, we take stock of these contributions by investigating which patterns can be identified in terms of content, authors, methods, and so on. We will show a clear path to a more diverse world, both in terms of topics covered as well as in authorship and readership. It is our pleasure to continue on this path and we hope that you will keep reading our journal, and submit your work! The editorial team includes Sandra van Thiel, Christina Andrews, Deanna Malatesta, and Robin Bouwman.

*Sandra van Thiel*