# New Public Governance in practice: a toolbox model for public policy in times of networks, uncertainty and complexity[1]

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## Abstract

With the decline of the great ideologies of the 20th century and the ongoing revision of the socioeconomic model and social contract in the 21st century, the concept of an entrepreneurial administration has gained significant momentum. This administration is envisioned as one capable of dialogue and engagement with other actors in its ecosystem, asserting its voice in designing a constituent process centred on the general interest, as well as economic, social, and environmental sustainability in an increasingly dynamic, complex, and uncertain environment. Although conceptually framed as "New Public Governance," this model still faces substantial challenges in practical implementation. These challenges arise both within internal organizational structures—such as procedural inefficiencies, scope of competencies, and relationships between units and different administrations—and in the delivery of public policies and services, including effectiveness, efficiency, and citizen engagement. This article examines the critical factors necessary to implement this model, drawing on a constellation of instruments designed to drive profound transformation. These instruments aim for systemic impact beyond immediate results, recognizing the inherent difficulties in establishing clear causal relationships, reaching unanimous diagnoses, and charting stable paths of action. Our analysis is structured around six key levers of change: governance, organization, talent, processes, quality in management, and democratic quality. The findings point toward an administration that focuses less on direct execution and more on enabling: acting as a platform that facilitates, articulates, energizes, and structures ecosystems of actors to achieve broadly shared objectives and impacts. Ultimately, this approach seeks to open the public system to greater collaboration with the civic, economic, political, and social ecosystems.

## Keywords

## Acknowledgements

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[1] Automatic translation from original in Catalan with minor edits. Please forgive remaining errors.

## Introduction: New Public Governance

Over the past 200 years, Public Administration has broadly evolved through three main models (Bryson, Crosby & Bloomberg, 2014; Brugué Torruella, 2022). The first model emerged alongside the establishment of liberal states. Characterized by Weberian bureaucracy–referred to as Napoleonic Administration in countries with a French tradition–this model primarily focuses on organizing society. Its core functions include providing a regulatory framework, maintaining a monopoly on the use of force to ensure law enforcement and security, and developing essential infrastructure necessary for the functioning of society.

With the reconstruction efforts following World War II, alongside the recognition of workers' rights and the need for economic intervention, the Administration significantly expanded its role. It became deeply involved in providing public services and implementing public policies, particularly in the economic and social domains. The growing demand to "do more with less" and achieve measurable goals paved the way for the second model: New Public Management. This approach emphasizes effectiveness, efficiency, and operating the Administration with the principles and practices of a private company as its guiding framework.

| | New Public Management (NPM) | Neo-Weberian State (NWS) | New Public Governance (NPG) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **External dimension** | • Privatization<br>• Outsourcing<br>• External recruitment<br>• Quasi-public companies<br>• Public-private collaborations<br>• User surveys | • User dashboards<br>• User surveys | • Network governance<br>• Intersectoral collaboration<br>• Public-private innovation partnerships<br>• Co-creation and co-production with citizens |
| **Internal dimension** | • Single-purpose public organizations<br>• Strategic management<br>• Performance management<br>• Performance measurement<br>• Execution contracts<br>• Bonus salary systems<br>• *Benchmarking*<br>• Product orientation | • (Re)centralization of public services<br>• Modernization of public bureaucracy<br>• Professionalization of public services<br>• Results-oriented management<br>• Evaluation and ex post control<br>• User orientation in services | **?**<br>(as in the original) |

Table 1. The external and internal dimensions of the three major models of reform of the Administration. Source: Krogh, AH & Triantafillou, P. (2024).

The limitations of New Public Management, particularly its perceived neglect of the general interest, have been exacerbated by globalization and digitalization, prompting strong criticism of the model. Over the past two and a half decades, a new model has emerged that seeks to retain the focus on efficiency and effectiveness while restoring the public-oriented vision of governance (Mazzucato & Ryan-Collins, 2022). This model also recognizes the interdependence of actors in delivering services and policies, shifting the focus from achieving isolated results to generating systemic impact. Increasingly known as New Public Governance (Osborne, 2010; Torfing & Triantafillou, 2013; Krogh & Triantafillou, 2024), it has also been referred to New Public Service

(Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000), Digital-Era Governance (Dunleavy et al., 2006) or Network Governance (Considine, in Osborne, 2010). Between these models lies an intermediate stage, termed the Neo-Weberian State by Pollitt & Bouckaert (2000).

As illustrated in Table 1, however, this transitional phase appears to be protracted. While the theoretical underpinnings, particularly those addressing the broader environment, are well-defined, the practical application of this conceptual framework in public administration remains elusive. The challenge lies in translating theory into practice. Filling this void is the main goal of our present proposal: to provide an applied New Public Governance model after putting together a toolbox of instruments to implement public policy in times of networks, uncertainty and complexity.

## New Public Governance in practice

To address the question of how the New Public Governance model has been implemented in practice (even if tacitly or implicitly), we propose two exercises. First, we will reinterpret the theoretical framework(s) from an operational perspective, adapting it to the six primary levers of change or areas of administrative work: governance, organization, talent, processes, quality in management, and democratic quality. This approach draws chiefly, but not only, on the conceptual contributions of Denhard & Denhardt (2000); Osborne (2010a, 2010b, 2010c); Farneti, et al. (2010); Torfing & Triantafillou (2013); Bryson, Crosby & Bloomberg (2014); Mazzucato & Ryan-Collins (2022); and Krogh, A.H. & Triantafillou, P. (2024).

This exercise enables us to translate theoretical questions into practical challenges that require specific institutional designs or the implementation of tailored public policy instruments. The results are presented in the 6 following tables. For each area or lever of change, the left column outlines the theoretical dimension alongside its interpretation or adaptation within the New Public Governance framework. While this remains a theoretical reflection, it serves as a valuable tool to situate these concepts within their practical, operational context.

In Governance (Table 2) we include all the conceptual sphere of the Government, including its main philosophical approach, role in society and general considerations towards other actors. Governance will determine who is the Government, what it does and what devices it will come up to rule itself and its functions. We gather the reclamation of public interest –while keeping the benefits of the market– and the acknowledgment of third parties, now at a network's reach.

| Governance | |
|---|---|
| **Dimension** | **Approximation** |
| Conception of the public interest | Public interest is the result of a dialogue about shared values |
| Definition of the common good, public value, the public interest | Common good determined by broadly inclusive dialogue and deliberation informed by evidence and democratic and constitutional values |
| Justification for the role of government | Role of government is to ensure markets support public purpose, also by involving users in cocreation of policy |
| Material and ideological conditions | Concern with market, government, nonprofit and civic failures Concern with networked and collaborative governance |

| | |
|---|---|
| Mechanisms for achieving policy objectives | Building coalitions of public, nonprofit, and private agencies to meet mutually agreed upon needs<br>Build cross-sector collaborations and engaging citizens to achieve agreed objectives |
| Role of government | The role of the government is serving (negotiating and brokering interests among citizens and community groups, creating shared values) |
| Theoretical roots | Governance is based on institutional and network theory |
| Value base | Value base is dispersed and contested |

Table 2. Dimensions and approaches of the New Public Governance from the management point of view in the area of Governance. Source: Author, based on aforementioned works.

Organization (Table 3) is how Governance is led to its institutionalization, and how its inner design and internal relationships are set –please bear in mind that we are still in the realm of concepts and the theoretical framework. Silo-breaking and collaboration with the (inner and outer) environment become paramount.

| Organization | |
|---|---|
| **Dimension** | **Approximation** |
| Assumed organizational structure | Collaborative organizational structures with leadership shared internally and externally |
| Focus | Focus in the organization in its environment |
| Justification for the role of government | All markets and institutions are co-created by public, private and third sectors. |
| Organization | Boundary spanning and boundary maintenance at the organization level |
| Role of government agencies | Government acts as convener, catalyst, collaborator; sometimes steering, sometimes, rowing, sometimes partnering, sometimes staying out of the way |
| Source of rationality | The source of rationality are relationships |
| Withinput | Organization is based on collaboration between different levels, sectors, and actors: public plus private |

Table 3. Dimensions and approaches of the New Public Governance from the management point of view in the area of Organization. Source: Same as Table 2.

Talent (Table 4) deals with how NPG looks at professionals and teams at the conceptual level. As general interest –and social challenges– come to the forefront, public servants, and especially senior managers, become actors and not mere links on a chain that actively contribute to solving problems by having an impact on the system –well beyond producing results.

| Talent | |
|---|---|
| **Dimension** | **Approximation** |
| Approach to accountability | Public servants must attend to law, community values, political norms, professional standards, and citizen interests |
| Assumed motivational basis of public servants and administrators | Public servants and managers aim at public service, desire to contribute to society |

| Output | New tools empowering and engaging stakeholders in public problem solving and service production |
|---|---|
| Policy | Stakeholder management |
| Prevailing rationality and associated models of human behaviour | Strategic rationality, multiple tests of rationality (political, economic, organizational) |
| Prevailing rationality and associated models of human behaviour | Formal rationality, multiple tests of rationality (political, administrative, economic, legal, ethical), belief in public spiritedness beyond narrow self-interest, "reasonable person" open to influence through dialogue and deliberation |
| Primary virtue | Flexibility as a primary virtue |
| Resource allocation mechanism | Networks and relational contracts as the resource allocation mechanism |
| Role of politics | Public work is paramount, including determining policy objectives via dialogue and deliberation; democracy as "a way of life" |

Table 4. Dimensions and approaches of the New Public Governance from the management point of view in the area of Talent. Source: Same as Table 2.

Professionals and teams are organized around and perform processes (Table 5). But this processes, in NPG, while keeping a lead towards efficacy and efficiency, are now more led by values, bound to impact and do enable the concurrence of other actors, which now have a preeminent role in its very design.

| Processes | |
|---|---|
| **Dimension** | **Approximation** |
| Emphasis | Values, meaning and relationships are negotiated |
| Environment | Public policies and services are sustainable |
| Form of control | Co-production as an instrument of control |
| Input | Empowered participation and bringing together public and private actors in continued dialogue as a means of input |
| Material and ideological conditions | Concern with advanced information and communication technologies |
| Nature of the service system | The service system has an open-closed nature |
| Primary theoretical and epistemological foundations | Theoretical foundations are public and nonprofit management theory |
| Role of citizenship | Citizens seen as problem-solvers and co-creators actively engaged in creating what is valued by the public and is good for the public |
| Service delivery focus | Brokerage is the service delivery focus |

Table 5. Dimensions and approaches of the New Public Governance from the management point of view in the area of Processes. Source: Same as Table 2.

If governance and organization are about institutions, and talent and processes are about their constituent pieces, quality in management and democratic quality are about how the latter are intertwined to conform the former. Quality in management (Table 6) in the practical arena, Democratic quality in the ethical one. In operations, the most

important thing becomes the comprehensive cycle of policymaking leading to systematic impact for change. Diagnosis, evidence, design, implementation and evaluation are carefully taken care of.

| Quality in management | |
| --- | --- |
| **Dimension** | **Approximation** |
| Underlying assumptions | The underlying assumption is that future is uncertain because of potential for novelty and structural change; system is characterised by complex behaviour, nonlinear feedback loops |
| Approach to risk | Failure is accepted and encouraged as a learning device |
| Business case approach | Focused on systemic change to achieve mission – dynamic efficiency (including innovation, spillover effects and systemic change) |
| Evaluation | Ongoing and reflexive evaluation of whether system is moving in direction of mission via achievement of intermediate milestones and user engagement. Focus on portfolio of policies and interventions, and their interaction |
| Feedback | Multiple forms of accountability based on a variety of standards attuned to organizational learning |
| Key objectives | Key objective is to create public value in such a way that what the public most cares about is addressed effectively and what is good for the public is put in place |
| Key values | Key values are efficiency, effectiveness |
| Material and ideological conditions | Concern with so-called wicked problems; deepening inequality |

Table 6. Dimensions and approaches of the New Public Governance from the management point of view in the area of Quality in management. Source: Same as Table 2.

As it happened with operations, in Democratic quality (Table 7) the comprehensive cycle of policymaking is also taken care of but now on its qualitative side. It is not only about performing, but also about how public institutions perform: means matter.

| Democratic quality | |
| --- | --- |
| **Dimension** | **Approximation** |
| Administrative discretion | Administration is discreet but with some limits and accountable |
| Contribution to the democratic process | The State delivers dialogue and catalyses and responds to active citizenship in pursuit of the public good |
| Key values | Key values are the full range of democratic and constitutional values |
| Material and ideological conditions | Concern with hollowed or thinned state; "downsized" citizenship |
| Nature of the state | The state is plural and pluralist |
| Primary theoretical and epistemological foundations | Theoretical foundations are democratic theory, varied approaches to knowledge including positive, interpretive, critical, and postmodern |
| To whom are public servants responsive? | Public servants are responsive to citizens |

Table 7. Dimensions and approaches of the New Public Governance from the management point of view in the area of Democratic quality. Source: Same as Table 2.

## A new toolbox for public policy

Having recategorized the theoretical framework, we now turn to identifying the instruments introduced in practice to provide applied responses to these theoretical concepts. While no cohesive model has emerged, a wide array of instruments has been developed over time, operationalizing what was once purely conceptual. These instruments often arise in an emergent, decentralized, and uncoordinated manner, sometimes lacking coherence and consistency. However, they exist and generally address the specific needs for which they were created.

Over time, some of these instruments begin to interact, forming part of broader approaches and methodologies. These are often integrated into plans or strategies that group and promote them collectively. Tacitly or explicitly, we pose that these tools are shaping a new toolbox for delivering public services and policies in times of network management, uncertainty and complexity, aligning closely with the dimensions and theoretical principles of New Public Governance.

In the following sections, we outline the six levers of change. Each section includes a brief summary of the area, accompanied by a table presenting the instruments, the approaches they embody, and selected references that elaborate on or exemplify their application.

## Governance

The key reflection in this area is the shift from the concept of government to that of governance. This shift recognizes that governance must be dynamic, flexible, and adaptable across time, space, and environmental contexts. Instead of a singular, centralized government, what is needed is a network of governments supported by protocols to continuously redefine and adapt, a government of governments, a design of such governing body: a governance system. This system moves from a vertical structure to a more horizontal one, fostering relationships –often of equality– with other actors in the ecosystem.

Additionally, governance shifts its focus toward the long term, prioritizing systemic action over merely instrumental or situational responses. It emphasizes the general interest, the creation of public value, and achieving meaningful impact. As we will discuss further in the context of Quality in Management, this long-term perspective aims to act proactively on "tomorrow" rather than reacting to "today."

While the prioritization of effectiveness and efficiency remains, it is now framed in terms of social profitability, public ethics, and contributions to improving well-being, rather than being limited to purely economic measures.

This is where network governance, mission-oriented policy, the portfolio approach or, more in general, the concept of the state as a platform become practical instruments of dynamic government, strategy and policy design.

| Governance | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Instrument** | **Approximation** | **References** |
| Public Value Governance | Approach focusing on creating public value through collaborative governance and management. | Crosby, 't Hart & Torfing (2019); Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg (2014); Kelly, Mulgan & Muers (2002); Mazzucato & Ryan-Collins (2022) |

| Networked Governance | Facilitating governance models that emphasize decentralized, cross-sectoral networks for decision-making. | Hartley (2005); Stoker (2006); Osborne (2010); Bryson, Crosby, Bloomberg (2014); |
|---|---|---|
| Mission-Oriented Policy | Setting clear, ambitious goals to align resources and efforts toward addressing grand societal challenges. | Mazzucato (2017); EC & Mazzucato (2018); EC Chicot, Kuittinen & Lykogianni (2018); EC, Türk, Arrilucea & Eagle (2018); EC & Mazzucato (2019); OECD (2021a); Goulden & Kattel (2022); Wittmann et al. (2022); Mulgan (2024); Wittmann et al. (2024) |
| State as a Platform | Leveraging technology and data to create ecosystems that enable third parties to build value-added services for the public. | Peña-López (2014); Peña-López (2019); Peña-López, I. (2020); Tõnurist & Hanson (2020) |
| Market-Oriented Governance | Leveraging market mechanisms to improve service delivery and policy effectiveness. | Osborne & Gaebler (1992); Mazzucato (2023) |
| Co-management | Shared governance strategies between government and stakeholders to manage public services or resources. | Osborne (2010); Peña-López (2019a); Peña-López (2020) |
| Portfolio Approach | Balancing multiple programs, policies, or interventions to optimize outcomes under uncertainty. | EC & Mazzucato (2019); OECD (2021a); UNDP (2022); Goulden & Kattel (2022); UNDP (2023a); UNDP (2023b) |
| Principle of Subsidiarity | Ensuring that decisions are made at the most effective and appropriate level of governance. | OECD (2023); Font i Llovet et al. (2023) |

Table 8. Instruments and approaches of the New Public Governance applied to management. Area of Governance. Source: Author.

## Organization

The confluence of multiple and diverse actors in public policy represents a significant vector of change in organizational structures. While this shift has already transformed government into governance, its impact on institutional design –both within administrations and in their relationships with third parties– is even more profound. Concepts such as partnerships, the quadruple helix, and collective intelligence are evolving from theoretical ideas into practical instruments and methodologies, although they are not yet fully dominant.

Aligned with the principles of governance, hierarchies are flattening, and there is a growing emphasis on horizontal, networked collaboration. The new paradigm focuses less on "inside versus outside" and more on "connected versus disconnected," though significant challenges remain in accessing and influencing informal areas. Integrating third parties, particularly organized civil society and individual citizens, is a priority but remains difficult to achieve. The extent to which these third parties are structured as nodes or instances significantly affects the ability of hierarchical units to transcend traditional administrative structures.

Progress in organizational collaboration –both among administrations and with external actors– faces two major obstacles: the need for a paradigm shift in talent management within administrations, requiring new skills, and the necessity of a profound redesign of process engineering. But, in the meantime, instruments for temporary or permanent

collaboration, between institutions or with individuals, set the pace for collective intelligence and stakeholder engagement.

| Organization | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Instrument** | **Approximation** | **References** |
| Institutional Collaboration, Public Consortia | Fostering partnerships and alliances across government entities to address common goals. | Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & ESADE (2003); Generalitat de Catalunya (2005); Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & EAPC (2008); Brugué Torruella, Q., Canal, R. & Payà, P. (2010a); Murray, Caulier-Grice & Mulgan (2010); Col·legi d'Economistes de Catalunya (2018); Martí-Costa, Barres & Termes (2020); Osborne (2010); OECD (2021a); Font i Llovet et al. (2023) |
| Public/Social/Private Partnerships (PSPP) | Collaborations among public, private, and nonprofit sectors to achieve measurable social and economic outcomes. | Osborne & Gaebler (1992); Brouwer et al. (2016); Brouwer & Brouwers (2017); Sellick (2019); Torfing, Sørensen. & Røiseland (2019); Tõnurist & Hanson (2020); UNDP (2023a) |
| Redesign of Administration Levels | Rethinking and restructuring administrative layers for efficiency and agility in governance. | Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & ESADE (2003); Generalitat de Catalunya (2005); Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & EAPC (2008); Col·legi d'Economistes de Catalunya (2018); Font i Llovet et al. (2023) |
| Rapid Response Units | Teams deployed to address urgent public challenges quickly and effectively. | Start & Hovland (2004); OECD (2020a) |
| Collective Intelligence | Harnessing diverse knowledge and expertise to address societal issues. | Sellick (2019); Peach, Berditchevskaia & Bass (2020); OECD (2020b); Ramos, Sweeney, Peach & Smith (2020); Monteiro & Dal Borgo (2023) |
| Stakeholder Engagement and Citizen Participation | Best practices for involving stakeholders in research, policymaking, and fiscal planning. | Durham et al. (2014); Brouwer et al. (2016); Brouwer & Brouwers (2017); Peña-López (2018); OECD (2020a); OECD (2020b); OECD (2021a); Ramia et al. (2021); UNDP (2022); Monteiro & Dal Borgo (2023); Nguyen, Drejer & Marquès (2024) |

Table 9. Instruments and approaches of the New Public Governance applied to management. Area of Organization. Source: Author.

## Talent

Talent is arguably the area where the paradigm shift toward New Public Governance is most evident, yet also the most complex and delicate. Centering talent over procedure fundamentally transforms the role of the public servant. They must transition from being a bureaucrat –traditionally tasked with processing files and administering citizens (still referred to as "the administered" in much terminology)– to becoming a designer and implementer of public services and policies in collaboration with citizens, who are now viewed as partners and target beneficiaries of the intended impact. This shift prioritizes skills and abilities over static knowledge, making talent development strategies, rather than traditional human resource management, essential.

The demand for external interaction redefines the public servant's relationship with knowledge, positioning it as both central and a currency of exchange within the organization and beyond. Training courses evolve into continuous learning, supported by technology that enables ubiquity and accessibility. Objectives are increasingly defined with a focus on designing projects that are both achievable and evaluable.

Despite widespread agreement on what needs to be done, and the tools required, the resistance to change in this area is immense. Talent development is one of the most explored, designed, and prototyped areas, but it faces significant hurdles in mass implementation. These challenges stem from the fragility of existing balances in professional relations in the Administration. Notwithstanding, there are plenty initiatives to have a strategic approach to talent management, definition and deployment of skill frameworks, total rethinking of learning and development –usually implying also the total rethinking of institutes of Public Administration– and, most of all, a decided trend towards working around goals and projects and being able to evaluate performance accordingly.

| Talent | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Instrument** | **Approximation** | **References** |
| Comprehensive Talent Management | Managing public sector workforce capabilities through strategic recruitment, retention, and growth plans. | Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & ESADE (2003); Generalitat de Catalunya (2005); Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & EAPC (2008); Cortés Carreres (2021); Cuenca Cervera (2021); Mapelli Marchena (2021); Ramió Matas (2021); Peña-López (2023a); Gorriti Bontigui (2024a); Gorriti Bontigui (2024b) |
| Professional Function Frameworks and Professional Profiles | Establishing defined roles and profiles to structure and professionalize public sector careers. | OECD (2017); Cortés Carreres (2021); Cuenca Cervera (2021); Mapelli Marchena (2021); OECD (2021b); Ramió Matas (2021); Schwendinger, F., Topp, L. & Kovacs, V. (2022); OECD (2023); Gorriti Bontigui (2024a); Gorriti Bontigui (2024b); |
| Competency and Skills Frameworks | Establishing standardized competency and skill sets for public sector roles. | OECD (2017); OECD (2021b); Schwendinger, F., Topp, L. & Kovacs, V. (2022); OECD (2023); Gorriti Bontigui (2024a); Gorriti Bontigui (2024b); |
| Human Resources Strategy | Developing strategic policies and frameworks to align HR practices with public sector goals, with a long-term vision. | Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & ESADE (2003); Generalitat de Catalunya (2005); Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & EAPC (2008); Cortés Carreres (2021); Cuenca Cervera (2021); Mapelli Marchena (2021); Ramió Matas (2021); Gorriti Bontigui (2024a); Gorriti Bontigui (2024b) |
| Talent Cycle Management | Develop HR policies and strategic frameworks that are transversal throughout the entire cycle of incorporation, development, and separation. | Cortés Carreres (2021); Cuenca Cervera (2021); Mapelli Marchena (2021); Ramió Matas (2021; Gorriti Bontigui (2024a); Gorriti Bontigui (2024b) |
| Senior and Top Public Management | Define senior management in the public sector based on leadership | Ramió Matas (2021); Cortés Abad (2024); Gorriti Bontigui (2024a); Gorriti |

| | skills and meritocratic standards. | Bontigui (2024b) |
|---|---|---|
| Competency-Based Recruitment and Selection | Recruiting public servants based on defined skills and competency standards. | Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & ESADE (2003); Generalitat de Catalunya (2005); Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & EAPC (2008); OECD (2017); Gorriti Bontigui (2018); Cortés Carreres (2021); Cuenca Cervera (2021); Mapelli Marchena (2021); OECD (2021b); Ramió Matas (2021); OECD (2023); Cortés Abad (2024); Gorriti Bontigui (2024a); Gorriti Bontigui (2024b) |
| Recruitment and selection strategies and innovation | Recruiting strategies and methodologies centered on people, not on mass procedures. | Cortés Carreres (2021); Cuenca Cervera (2021); Mapelli Marchena (2021); Ramió Matas (2021); |
| Professional development | Developing public sector employees through structured training, learning, and capacity-building programs. | Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & ESADE (2003); Generalitat de Catalunya (2005); Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & EAPC (2008); Cortés Carreres (2021); Cuenca Cervera (2021); Mapelli Marchena (2021); Ramió Matas (2021); OECD (2023); Monteiro & Dal Borgo (2023); Peña-López (2023a); Gorriti Bontigui (2024a); Gorriti Bontigui (2024b) |
| Ed-Tech for public servants | Technology applied to learning and talent development, with independence of time and space, wherever is required. | Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & EAPC (2008); Peña-López (2020); Peña-López (2023a); Gorriti Bontigui (2024a); Gorriti Bontigui (2024b) |
| Horizontal Career | Creating opportunities for public servants to grow through lateral job roles and cross-functional assignments. | Generalitat de Catalunya (2005); Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & EAPC (2008); Ramió Matas (2021); Peña-López (2023a); Gorriti Bontigui (2024a); Gorriti Bontigui (2024b) |
| Goal-Oriented Individual Work Organization and Incentives | Structuring work and rewards for individuals based on achieving specific goals. | Osborne & Gaebler (1992); Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & ESADE (2003); Generalitat de Catalunya (2005); Stoker, G. (2006); Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & EAPC (2008); Osborne (2010); EC Chicot, Kuittinen & Lykogianni (2018); Ramió Matas (2021); McLean et al. (2022); Monteiro & Dal Borgo (2023) |
| Project-Based Individual Work Organization and Incentives | Structuring work and rewards for individuals around completing specific projects. | Col·legi d'Economistes de Catalunya (2018); Cortés Carreres (2021); Cuenca Cervera (2021); Mapelli Marchena (2021); Ramió Matas (2021); |
| Performance Evaluation of Public Servants | Assessing public servants' contributions based on organizational objectives and outcomes. | Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & ESADE (2003); Generalitat de Catalunya (2005); Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & EAPC (2008); Col·legi d'Economistes de Catalunya (2018); Cortés Carreres (2021); Cuenca Cervera (2021); Mapelli Marchena (2021); Ramió Matas (2021); |

Table 10. Instruments and approaches of the New Public Governance applied to management. Area of Talent. Source: Author.

## Processes

The equivalent of prioritizing talent over procedure in the process area is putting data instead of files at the center. This shift establishes the Administration of the Data as the dominant paradigm, necessitating a (re)orientation of all process engineering within the Administration. Data Administration –encompassing data governance, open data, interoperability, single digital identity, and more– is underpinned by a suite of technologies and applications designed to enhance governance (GovTech), business management (Business Tech), and collaboration with other ecosystem actors, who also benefit from technological support (CivicTech).

The abundance of data, along with its strategic and mass-scale management, enables not only the rethinking of processes but also their refocusing on individuals and impact. This is often achieved through the active participation of individuals, either directly or indirectly, by equipping all actors with tools and methodologies for collaborative and open innovation. These include testbeds, prototyping, and piloting opportunities. The ultimate goal is to reach the "philosopher's stone" of administration: large-scale, (quasi-)automated management of personalized and person-centered services.

| Processes | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Instrument** | **Approximation** | **References** |
| Administration of the Data and Data Governance | Establishing frameworks to manage and govern data effectively for public sector operations. | Sellick (2019); OECD (2020a); OECD (2023); Dunleavy & Margetts (2024) |
| Single Digital Identity | Establishing a unified and secure digital identity for citizens to access public services. | Peña-López (2019b); OECD (2023); Dunleavy & Margetts (2024) |
| Data Analytics | Analyzing big data to improve public service delivery and decision-making. | Sellick (2019); Dunleavy & Margetts (2024) |
| GovTech | Digital platforms to improve public management | Sellick (2017); Peña-López (2019b); Dunleavy & Margetts (2024); Mulgan (2024) |
| Business Tech | Digital platforms to improve management | Sellick (2019); Dunleavy & Margetts (2024 |
| Civic Tech | Digital platforms to increase public participation in policymaking. | Sellick (2017); Peña-López (2019b); Peach, Berditchevskaia & Bass (2020) |
| Behavioral Insights | Using psychological principles to design better public policies and services. | Vogel (2012); Sellick (2019); UK Government Office for Science (2022); UK Government Office for Science (2023a) |
| Design-thinking | A user-centered approach to solving complex governance and policy challenges through iterative design. | Echegaray Eizaguirre, Urbano Ortega & Barrutieta Anduiza (2017); Tõnurist & Hanson (2020); Design Council (2021); Barbrook-Johnson & Penn (2022) |
| Digitization, Redesign of Processes, and Digital Services | Enhancing public sector efficiency and accessibility through digitized services and process redesign. | OECD (2017); OECD (2021b); Torfing (2019); Ramió Matas (2021); Schwendinger, Topp & Kovacs (2022); Dunleavy & Margetts (2024); Mulgan (2024) |
| Policy Design Labs | Facilities for crafting innovative and inclusive public policies. | Murray, Caulier-Grice & Mulgan (2010); Sellick (2019); Tõnurist & Hanson (2020); UNDP (2022); Krogh & Triantafillou (2024); Nguyen, Drejer & Marquès |

| | | (2024) |
|---|---|---|
| Sandboxes, Testbeds, Experimentation Frameworks and Digital Twins | Controlled environments for testing new policies, technologies, or services, including simulation of real-world scenarios and innovation trials. | Sellick (2019); Tõnurist & Hanson (2020) |
| Hackathons, Ideatons, and Challenge Prizes | Incentives to solve complex problems through collaborative competitions and idea generation events. | Murray, Caulier-Grice & Mulgan (2010); Sellick (2017); Peach, Berditchevskaia & Bass (2020) |
| Co-creation and Co-design | Collaborative approaches that involve stakeholders in designing and implementing policies or services. | Brouwer & Brouwers (2017); Mazzucato (2017); Siebers & Torfing (2018); EU & Mazzucato (2019); Torfing, Sørensen& Røiseland (2019); Mazzucato (2023); Mikkelsen & Røiseland (2024) |
| Prototyping and Pilots | Developing and testing small-scale models, including rapid sprints, to refine and implement solutions effectively. | Echegaray Eizaguirre, Urbano Ortega & Barrutieta Anduiza (2017); Peña-López (2019b); Sellick (2019); Brest (2000); Peach, Berditchevskaia & Bass (2020); Ramos, Sweeney, Peach & Smith (2020); Brugué Torruella (2022); Tõnurist & Hanson (2020); UNDP (2022); UNDP & Agirre Lehendakaria Center (2023) |
| Citizen Journey | Mapping the citizen's experience to enhance service delivery and improve public engagement. | Keane et al. (2014) |
| Service Charters | Providing clear standards and commitments for public service delivery to citizens. | Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & ESADE (2003); Generalitat de Catalunya (2005); Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & EAPC (2008) |
| People-Powered Public Services | Involving citizens directly in the design and delivery of services. | Sellick (2019); UNDP & Agirre Lehendakaria Center (2023) |

Table 11. Instruments and approaches of the New Public Governance applied to management. Area of Processes. Source: Author.

## Quality in management

Governance and organization, on one hand, and talent and processes, on the other, function as complementary partners. The former drives change at macro and meso levels, focusing on collective and systemic shifts, while the latter operates at the micro level, addressing individual or specific changes. Quality in management and democratic quality, meanwhile, act transversally, embedding value-based transformations across all levels –enhancing operational standards (quality in management) and aligning with broader missions (democratic quality).

At the management level, a key shift –visible in governance and organizational approaches– is the transition from a division of tasks and responsibilities by areas of competence to a model based on confluence. Traditional administrative silos, focused exclusively on specific competences, are becoming more porous to facilitate collaboration with other actors, both internal (other administrations) and external (private sector, academia, civil society).

This porosity shifts the focus from procedures to goals, challenges, needs, and expected impacts. The logical next step is a project-based approach, moving away from rigid structures determined solely by budgets, annual cycles, or procedural

confines. Instead, priorities are set based on challenges and outcomes, with citizens and societal impact at the core.

To enable this shift, an outward-facing perspective replaces the traditionally inward-looking mindset of the Administration. The focus transitions from "who is affected" to "who is involved." Mapping stakeholders and issues becomes essential, as does understanding the relationships within the system. Given the complexity, clarity is achieved through exercises in naming, framing, and sensemaking, allowing for widely shared diagnoses, if not consensus. Policies are then reoriented toward impact, with a strong emphasis on evaluation and stakeholder collaboration.

For the Administration, this represents a Copernican shift, as it requires adopting a bottom-up and outside-in perspective –approaches fundamentally at odds with its traditional nature. *Eppur si muove*.

| Quality in management | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Instrument** | **Approximation** | **References** |
| Actor Mapping and Stakeholder Analysis | Identifying and visualizing key actors and their relationships to improve stakeholder understanding. | Durham et al. (2014); Brouwer et al. (2016); Brouwer & Brouwers (2017); OECD (2021a); Ramia et al. (2021); Barbrook-Johnson & Penn (2022); UNDP (2022); Monteiro & Dal Borgo (2023); Nguyen, Drejer & Marquès (2024) |
| Issue Mapping and Diagnosis | Identifying and analyzing key challenges and opportunities to inform decision-making. | Start & Hovland (2004); Grantcraft (2006); Peach, Berditchevskaia & Bass (2020) |
| Systems Mapping, Analysis, and Thinking | Tools for analyzing and addressing interdependent and complex public sector problems. | Meadows (2009); Omidyar Group (2017) Cox (2020); Design Council (2021); Barbrook-Johnson & Penn (2022); UK Government Office for Science (2022); UK Government Office for Science (2023b); UK Government Office for Science (2023b); UK Government Office for Science (2023c) |
| Naming | Defining and identifying key concepts or initiatives to clarify focus and objectives in governance. | Brouwer & Brouwers (2017); Peña-López (2019b); Ramia et al. (2021) |
| Framing | Shaping the perspective or narrative around a policy issue to influence decision-making and engagement. | Brugnach et al. (2008); Osborne (2010); Keane et al. (2014); Omidyar Group (2017); Carson (2018); Tõnurist & Hanson (2020); Goulden & Kattel (2022); UNDP (2022); UK Government Office for Science (2023b) |
| Sensing/Sensemaking | Collecting and interpreting information to guide better decision-making in complex governance challenges. | Peach, Berditchevskaia & Bass (2020); Ramos et al. (2020); Mazzucato (2023); UNDP & Agirre Lehendakaria Center (2023) |
| Managing Uncertainty and Complexity | Navigating uncertain and complex governance challenges using adaptive and systems-based approaches. | van der Heijden (1997); Ravetz (1999); Saltelli & Funtowicz (2017); Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & ESADE (2003); Generalitat de Catalunya (2005); Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & EAPC (2008); Brugué Torruella, Canal & Payà (2010b); Martí-Costa, Barres & Termes (2020); Ramos, Sweeney, Peach & Smith (2020); Peña-López (2023b) |
| Futures Thinking and | Engages communities in shaping | van der Heijden (1997); Ravetz (1999); |

| Strategic Foresight | long-term strategies, scenarios, and policies for a sustainable future. | Saltelli & Funtowicz (2017); UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence (2018); Crosby, 't Hart & Torfing (2019); Torfing, Sørensen & Røiseland (2019); Tõnurist & Hanson (2020); UNDP & Agirre Lehendakaria Center (2023); UK Government Office for Science (2024) |
|---|---|---|
| Social, Open, and Collaborative Innovation | Tools for generating, scaling, and democratizing innovative solutions to societal challenges. | Murray, Caulier-Grice & Mulgan (2010); Hartley, Sørensen & Torfing (2013); Peña-López (2014); Crosby, 't Hart & Torfing (2019); Torfing (2019); Nguyen, Drejer & Marquès (2024) |
| Innovation, Government, and Governance Labs | Dedicated spaces and methodologies for co-creating and testing innovative solutions in governance and public administration. | Murray, Caulier-Grice & Mulgan (2010); Sellick (2019); Tõnurist & Hanson (2020); UNDP (2022); Krogh & Triantafillou (2024); Nguyen, Drejer & Marquès (2024) |
| Citizen Science and Open Research | Involving the public in scientific research and collaborative efforts to democratize knowledge production. | IDRC (2017); McLean et al. (2022); |
| Outcome Mapping | A framework for planning, monitoring, and evaluating the changes driven by programs or interventions. | Earl, Carden & Smutylo (2001); Liyanage (2009); Vogel (2012); Greenway & Loosemore (2015); OECD (2020a); Ramia et al. (2021); Barbrook-Johnson & Penn (2022) |
| Impact-Oriented Policy | Aligning public policies with measurable societal impacts rather than just outputs. | Start & Hovland (2004); IDRC (2017); EC Chicot, Kuittinen & Lykogianni (2018); EC, Türk, Arrilucea & Eagle (2018); Ramia et al. (2021); Wittmann et al. (2024) |
| Evidence-Based Policy and What Works Initiatives | Institutions providing evidence-based insights to improve public sector practices. | van der Heijden (1997); Ravetz (1999); Saltelli & Funtowicz (2017); Nesta (2016); IDRC (2017); McLean et al. (2022); |
| Strategic and Operational Planning | Aligning goals and resources through structured planning at strategic and operational levels. | Osborne & Gaebler (1992); Start & Hovland (2004); Stein & Valters (2012); Vogel (2012); UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence (2018); Tõnurist & Hanson (2020) |
| Anticipatory Regulation | Framework for adapting regulation to emerging technologies and societal trends. | Durham et al. (2014); Keane et al. (2014); Brouwer et al. (2016); IDRC (2017) |
| Theory of Change | Framework for planning and evaluating pathways to social impact. | Connell & Kubisch (1998); Brest (2000); Anderson (2006); Grantcraft (2006); Liyanage (2009); Stein & Valters (2012); Vogel (2012) |
| Evaluation and Assessment in the Policy-Making Cycle | Developing structured approaches for evaluating and assessing policies at all stages of their lifecycle. | Connell et al. (1995); Grantcraft (2006); Connell & Kubisch (1998); Blamey, A. & Mackenzie, M. (2007); Ofir et al. (2016); OECD (2020a); McLean et al. (2022); |

Table 12. Instruments and approaches of the New Public Governance applied to management. Area of Quality in Management. Source: Author.

## Democratic quality

Closely tied to quality in management and the recovery of public value creation, the field of democratic quality focuses on the *how*, much as quality in management emphasizes the *what*. In a democracy –especially when concerns about its degradation

are growing– the *how* is crucial for ensuring the legitimacy and social sustainability of actions by the Administration and State institutions.

Instruments related to good governance, public ethics, integrity, transparency, institutional collaboration, and citizen participation play a central role in this area. The aim is to consciously, intentionally, and explicitly design democratic institutions and their tools. This involves prioritizing the mission over the norm, serving as a platform for civic and political action rather than leading by mere direct execution, and focusing on systemic impact rather than purely quantitative results.
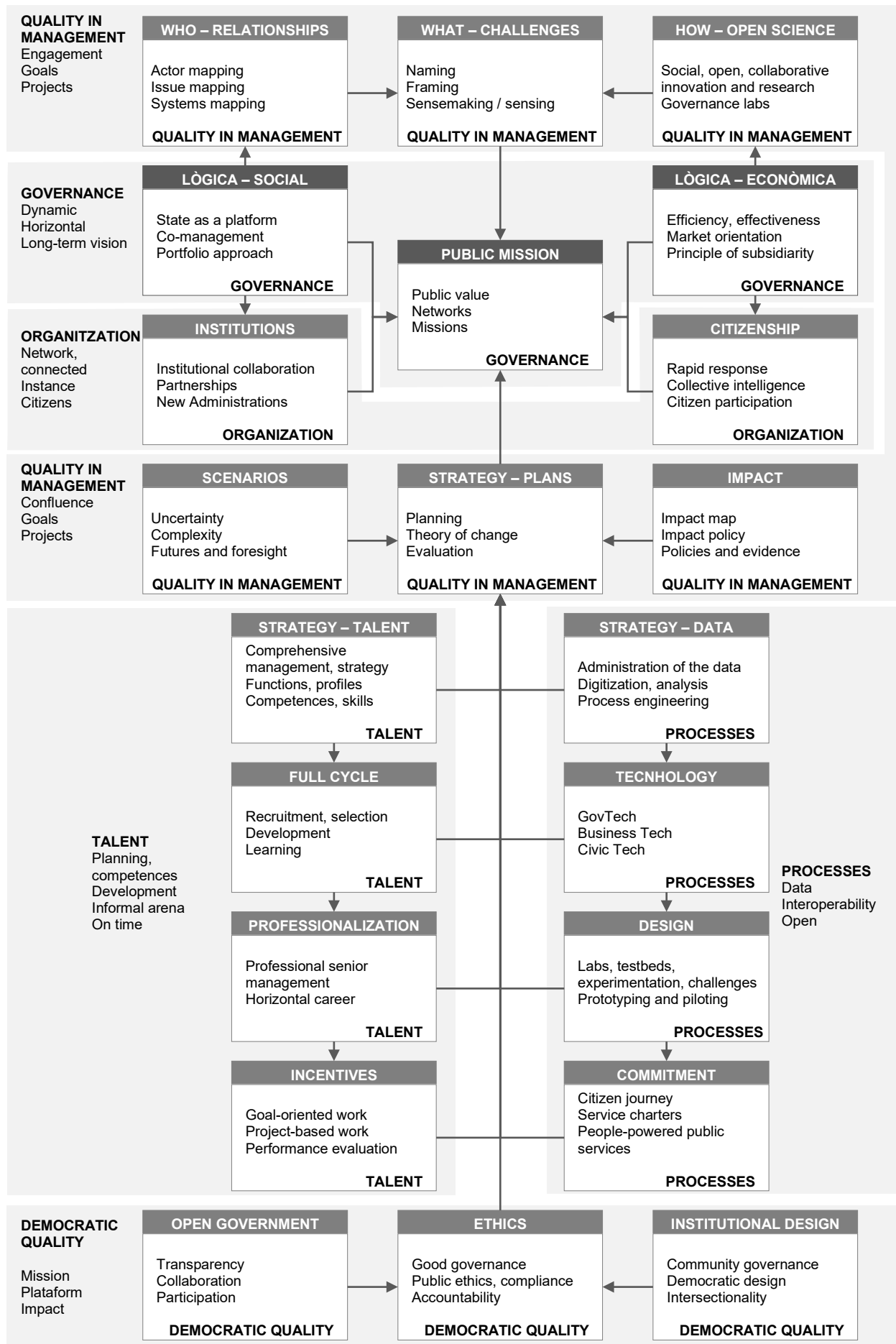
Many governments have begun initiatives in this area, which, while often having limited practical impact, hold significant potential to foster a cultural shift within the Administration. However, this area also carries the risk of disillusionment if efforts fail to translate from values into actionable virtues.

| Democratic Quality | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Instrument** | **Approximation** | **References** |
| Good Governance, Ethic Codes, Compliance, Accountability | Ensuring ethical practices, compliance, and accountability in governance processes. | Osborne & Gaebler (1992); Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & ESADE (2003); Generalitat de Catalunya (2005); Associació Catalana de Gestió Pública & EAPC (2008); Osborne (2010); Col·legi d'Economistes de Catalunya (2018); Vogel (2012); Peña-López (2019a); OECD (2020a); Mazzucato (2023); OECD (2023) |
| Community-Owned Governance | Engages citizens in decision-making processes to co-create governance solutions. | Osborne & Gaebler (1992); Murray, Caulier-Grice & Mulgan (2010) |
| Open Government | Promoting transparency, accountability, and public engagement through a paradigm that integrates them into everyday public management. | Peña-López (2019a); Peña-López (2019b); OECD (2020a); OECD (2020b); Peña-López (2020) |
| Transparency and Open Data | Promoting openness and accountability through accessible government datasets and policies. | Peña-López (2019b); Peach, Berditchevskaia & Bass (2020); OECD (2020a); OECD (2020b); Peña-López (2020); Mazzucato (2023) |
| Democratic and Intersectional Design Methods | Approaches for participatory and equitable problem-solving in public administration. | Keane et al. (2014); Brouwer & Brouwers (2017); IDRC (2017); McLean el al. (2022) |

Table 13. Instruments and approaches of the New Public Governance applied to management. Area of Democratic Quality. Source: Author.

Figure 1. New Public Governance in practice: a toolbox
for public policy in times of networks, uncertainty and complexity

**QUALITY IN MANAGEMENT**
Engagement
Goals
Projects

**WHO – RELATIONSHIPS**

Actor mapping
Issue mapping
Systems mapping

**QUALITY IN MANAGEMENT**

**WHAT – CHALLENGES**

Naming
Framing
Sensemaking / sensing

**QUALITY IN MANAGEMENT**

**HOW – OPEN SCIENCE**

Social, open, collaborative
innovation and research
Governance labs

**QUALITY IN MANAGEMENT**

**GOVERNANCE**
Dynamic
Horizontal
Long-term vision

**LÒGICA – SOCIAL**

State as a platform
Co-management
Portfolio approach

**GOVERNANCE**

**LÒGICA – ECONÒMICA**

Efficiency, effectiveness
Market orientation
Principle of subsidiarity

**GOVERNANCE**

**PUBLIC MISSION**

Public value
Networks
Missions

**GOVERNANCE**

**ORGANITZATION**
Network,
connected
Instance
Citizens

**INSTITUTIONS**

Institutional collaboration
Partnerships
New Administrations

**ORGANIZATION**

**CITIZENSHIP**

Rapid response
Collective intelligence
Citizen participation

**ORGANIZATION**

**QUALITY IN MANAGEMENT**
Confluence
Goals
Projects

**SCENARIOS**

Uncertainty
Complexity
Futures and foresight

**QUALITY IN MANAGEMENT**

**STRATEGY – PLANS**

Planning
Theory of change
Evaluation

**QUALITY IN MANAGEMENT**

**IMPACT**

Impact map
Impact policy
Policies and evidence

**QUALITY IN MANAGEMENT**

**STRATEGY – TALENT**

Comprehensive
management, strategy
Functions, profiles
Competences, skills

**TALENT**

**STRATEGY – DATA**

Administration of the data
Digitization, analysis
Process engineering

**PROCESSES**

**TALENT**
Planning,
competences
Development
Informal arena
On time

**FULL CYCLE**

Recruitment, selection
Development
Learning

**TALENT**

**TECNHOLOGY**

GovTech
Business Tech
Civic Tech

**PROCESSES**

**PROCESSES**
Data
Interoperability
Open

**PROFESSIONALIZATION**

Professional senior
management
Horizontal career

**TALENT**

**DESIGN**

Labs, testbeds,
experimentation, challenges
Prototyping and piloting

**PROCESSES**

**INCENTIVES**

Goal-oriented work
Project-based work
Performance evaluation

**TALENT**

**COMMITMENT**

Citizen journey
Service charters
People-powered public
services

**PROCESSES**

**DEMOCRATIC QUALITY**

Mission
Plataform
Impact

**OPEN GOVERNMENT**

Transparency
Collaboration
Participation

**DEMOCRATIC QUALITY**

**ETHICS**

Good governance
Public ethics, compliance
Accountability

**DEMOCRATIC QUALITY**

**INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN**

Community governance
Democratic design
Intersectionality

**DEMOCRATIC QUALITY**

## Conclusions? From the system to the ecosystem

We consider the abundance of instruments and good practices in their application as evidence of the practical implementation of the New Public Governance model. While it remains challenging to describe this as a fully articulated, coherent, and consistent applied model across all its components, it does form a well-aligned framework in both theory and practice. The difficulty in establishing it strategically and systematically stems from the profound reforms required –reforms that demand time, resources, and, most importantly, strong, committed, and sustained political leadership.

Even where some connections between theory and practice may appear forced or arbitrary, another perspective emerges: examining this set of instruments not solely through the lens of theory but from the vantage point of practice. This reflects the Administration's deliberate and visible effort to transition from a logic of systems to a logic of ecosystems (Peña-López, 2020).

| Scope | System | Ecosystem |
|---|---|---|
| Governance | Static<br>Vertical<br>Today | Dynamic<br>Horizontal<br>Tomorrow |
| Organization | Hierarchy, inside/outside<br>Unit<br>Professionals | Network, connected/disconnected<br>Instance<br>Citizens |
| Talent | Knowledge<br>Training<br>Formal scope | Planning, competences<br>Development<br>Informal setting, *on time* |
| Processes | File<br>Procedure<br>Closed | Data<br>Interoperability<br>Open |
| Quality in management | Competent<br>Procedure<br>Budget | Confluence<br>Goals<br>Projects |
| Democratic quality | Standard<br>Execution<br>Result | Mission<br>Platform<br>Impact |

Table 14. New Public Governance in practice: from the system to the ecosystem
Source: Author.

Given the complexity and uncertainty of the current environment, it is increasingly clear that the existing model of public systems –such as education, healthcare, and judicial systems– has reached its limits. This does not mean the model is invalid, but rather that it has exhausted its capacity to evolve further. Beyond incremental improvements, there is a clear inability to make these systems simultaneously scalable yet personalized, robust yet resilient, equitable yet efficient.

The New Public Governance model, when applied, enables the Administration to open itself to its environment, integrating informal, non-institutionalized, unstructured, and distributed elements of the challenges and resources surrounding it. Instruments aligned with New Public Governance –described earlier– are facilitating this permeability, breaking down the barriers between public systems and citizen ecosystems. For instance, the healthcare system connects with the care ecosystem,

the education system with the learning ecosystem, and the economic system with the social and solidarity economy ecosystem.

This shift in the Administration's direction represents the initial step toward a more profound transformation: the redefinition of the social contract. A new social contract demands a new model of State, which in turn requires a new model of Administration. The theoretical framework is established, and the instruments for its practical application are increasingly aligned. The responsibility now lies with senior management and institutional leaders to develop and implement change management strategies, transitioning from an exhausted model to one capable of underpinning a new social order.

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