

Conference Proposal: Structure and Organization of Government (SOG) Melbourne 2012

Proposed Date: January 27-29 2012.

Theme: Public Policy and Public Management: Exploring the Changing Linkages

Delegates will be asked to address the following theme in their paper:

The relationship between public policy and public management appears to be changing. The history of administrative reform was for a long time closely related to the trajectory of public policy. Administrative reform has been the government's strategy of adapting the public sector structures and processes to the goals and means defined in public policy. There have been obvious interdependencies between policy and administration, but overall it can safely be argued that in terms of reform administration has followed policy.

As the executive arm of government, the public bureaucracy has been developed and modified with reference to the problems which government and public policy have addressed. This pattern can be clearly observed over time as well as across space. Policy evaluation, budgetary reform and audit reform followed logically upon the growth of the public sector in the western democracies, including the United States, in the 1960s and 1970s. Similarly, as the regulatory role of the state became more emphasized in the late 1980s and 1990s, a large number of countries as well as the EU developed systems of independent regulatory agencies and central financial institutions. There is also a close linkage between the degree of decentralization in many countries and the extent to which public policy seeks to redistribute wealth among different regions of the country or the degree to which public service emphasizes equal standard.

This arrangement of policy driving administrative reform was seemingly disrupted with the emergence of the New Public Management (NPM). NPM was the administrative arm of the neo-liberal "turn" in much of the Anglo-American states in the 1980s with a large number of other countries (to a varying degree) following suit in the 1990s and 2000s. With the New Public Management, administrative reform became less driven by specific problems facing the public sector and more driven by values. With strong institutional support from transnational organizations like the OECD, IMF and WB, the epistemic community propagating NPM was probably stronger than any of the preceding waves of administrative reform. International transfer of ideas per se was not a new phenomenon but the endorsement of such powerful international organizations was unprecedented.

If policy, in theory, is assumed to define the direction of administrative reform, this is but one of several conceivable relationships between administrative change and policy change. The degree of rationality in the process of analysing problems and devising the solutions to those problems is a question which is open to empirical enquiry. It also is possible to think of the relationship between administrative reform and policy change in a garbage can perspective where administrative reform per se is the chief

objective and where problems are identified primarily to legitimize reform. In the more extreme scenario, administrative reform, directly or indirectly, drives changes in public policy.

Against this background, the key research question is whether we today are at a juncture where public policy and public management have become de-coupled or to what extent post-NPM reform has brought back administrative reform as a strategy to serve and support public policy. Uncovering the linkages between public policy and administrative reform is more complex than it would perhaps appear at first sight. A significant problem is related to assigning causality. For example, changes in administrative reform strategy and policy style are often driven by a more overarching ideological reorientation of government. Also, institutional theory would argue that administrative reform creates new institutional structures which, once institutionalized, will drive changes in public policy or perpetuate policy choice. Again, the New Public Management reform campaign stands out as exceptionally clear in its de-coupling of administrative reform and public policy. In order to understand the deeper logic of the relationship between administrative reform and public policy we need studies comparing, diachronically or synchronically, trajectories of administrative reform and policy change.

Venue/Date: University of Melbourne, Australia.

The proposed conference will be held under the auspices of the Centre for Public Policy, University of Melbourne and will run from Friday January 27 until Sunday January 29. The conference has been scheduled to follow the Public Policy Network (PPN) conference which is also being held in Melbourne in late January (Thurs 26-Fri 27). To make the most of this timing we propose holding a joint-session with the PPN on the Friday afternoon with a formal dinner to follow.

The local organizing committee may organize a seminar featuring senior SOG members at the Victoria Institute of Public Administration in Melbourne on “Myths of Post-NPM in the OECD World?”.

Programme:

Sessions will be held over three days. The proposed schedule facilitates a joint session with the PPN on the Friday afternoon.

Saturday and Sunday the programme will include three sessions:

09.00am – 11.00am (3 papers)

11.30am – 1.00pm (3 papers)

2.00pm – 4.40pm (4 papers)

Each paper will be allocated 30 minutes with a further 10 minutes for discussion.

Given the limited number of slots for papers conference participation will be limited to 20 delegates with each delegate delivering a maximum of one paper.

In terms of timing, we envisage that a call for papers will be released via the SOG website in late March 2011, with abstracts due by the end of June. This will enable us to finalise the program well in advance of the event.

Budget:

The Centre for Public Policy at the University of Melbourne will cover the following costs for the Chair and Co-Chair of SOG; Co-Editors of *Governance*; and up to 20 SOG delegates:

- Two nights accommodation (Friday and Saturday) at a nominated conference hotel (venue to be confirmed);
- Reimbursement for delegates transport costs to and from Melbourne airport;
- Formal dinner on Friday night (venue to be confirmed)
- Lunch and catering (morning/afternoon tea) at the conference venue for Saturday and Sunday
- All costs associated with venue/equipment hire, on-site catering and conference management;

Initial estimates (based on 25 delegates) suggest total cost for the event will be approximately \$14,400, comprising:

- Accommodation \$7600
- Catering \$4300
- Transportation \$1500
- Venue Hire (\$1000 excluding possible waiver).