

Evert Lindquist

Waiting for the Next Wave: Trajectories, Narratives and Conveying the State of Public Sector Reform¹

Overview

With the adoption of the State Sector Act in 1988, the New Zealand public sector revolution was in full motion. The Act was one of many initiatives that provided a new framework for government and managing public services (Boston et al., 1996; Scott, 2001). New Zealand rapidly became the poster child for what became known as the New Public Management, and an archetype scrutinised around the world. The audacity and intellectual coherence of the New Zealand model became a standard against which the progress of other governments was judged. These reforms were part of a larger social and economic transformation which led to dislocation and democratic reform. In the crucible of introducing and implementing these reforms, and in the inevitable re-adjustment phases, New Zealand gained a reputation for continuous reflection on its progress by its political leaders, government officials and a small band of impressive academics.

The 20th anniversary of the State Sector Act comes at an interesting time. Many academics and even government officials are proclaiming that the New Public Management (NPM) is dead, that we have moved into a post-NPM environment (e.g. Christensen and Laegrid, 2007), and that the ascribed features underpinning NPM will no longer serve as a compass for the next wave of reform. But there continues to be an appetite for renewed commitment and coherence when it comes to reform. A second wave seems to be taking shape – that of integrated, joined-up or horizontal governance – but I sense much less naïve enthusiasm about it, even as officials and entrepreneurs position themselves to ride and shape it, along with a band of academics waiting to criticise the next acronym. Many leaders have experienced a succession of reforms and see, all too well, the many elements

Dr Evert Lindquist is Professor and Director at the School of Public Administration, University of Victoria, British Columbia, and Senior Academic Fellow with the Canada School of Public Service. Professor Lindquist has published widely on topics relating to public sector reform, governance and decision making, including *A Critical Moment: capturing and conveying the evolution of the Canadian public service*.

of continuity. However, bobbing in the waves does not mean treading water: there continues to be great change in store, with a multiplicity of pressures on public sector institutions.

This article seeks to provide some high-level probes into various facets of this 'moment'. Are we in the midst of a new wave that has all but formed? Or are we still waiting for a different wave? Or are we in choppy waters on the surface, unaware of deeper currents and realities below? To animate these questions, I tap into literature from organisation theory that has only recently begun to creep into the public administration literature – a long overdue development (Lindquist, 2008). This writing encourages us to identify disjuncture between espoused theory and experienced realities flowing from announced public sector reforms, to seek out distinctive narratives, and to challenge rhetoric which suggests categorical approaches or situations.²

In this article I suggest that public service institutions and observers inadequately convey how our institutions have changed in concrete terms, thus allowing high-level framing and re-framing debates to swirl around. Academics can be too focused on higher-level sets of ideas and getting ready to deconstruct the next reform, while practitioners are grappling with challenges, issues and practice in specific areas, and, in turn, governments and institutional leaders episodically seek to launch the next reform. These dynamics will continue for good reasons, but we can do a better job of sizing up progress on public sector reform by taking closer looks at how our bureaux and other instruments work, particularly in comparative terms. To leaven the debates based on swirling narratives about public sector reform, we need to invest heavily in better ways to convey that experience and progress to date.

Riding and waiting for public sector reform waves

The New Zealand model of public sector reform of the 1980s will always be held out as an archetype because of the coherence and sharpness of its design, the engagement of the government with key central agency officials, and the swift, staged process of enacting reforms affecting all facets of government: structure, appointments, business models, new accountability regimes, etc. Even if many of the reforms were about making up for lost time in terms of modernising the government and the economy, they nevertheless set a standard against which the reforms of all other countries were judged. Governments and public service leaders in other countries, such as Canada, were criticised for a lack of boldness and coherence in advancing public sector reform (e.g. Aucoin, 1995).

The fiscal stress on governments emerging during the late 1970s and 1980s had led to a decline in the credibility of and satisfaction with traditional governance models, repertoires (across-the-board cutbacks) and competence. The quality

of governance and public administration became a political issue and needed to be dealt with in some measure. A new set of sensibilities and prescriptions were variously built up under the labels of managerialism, re-inventing government and alternative service delivery, and eventually took shape as the New Public Management. These ideas and approaches had been debated, acknowledged, and selected in varying degrees by many governments as the best contending ideas for moving away from the status quo (Kingdon, 2003). NPM-style ideas were leading contenders to underpin change, and, in political and economic environments where business practices and institutions had more credibility, it was no

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surprise that many Western governments and institutions like the OECD were anxious to be, at the very least, seen as embracing these ideas – what Meyer and Rowan (1977) would call normative alignment. New Zealand's reforms became closely associated with the NPM movement, along with initiatives in other countries.

No matter how attractive many of the aspirations and approaches ascribed to the New Public Management movement were, different jurisdictions took up and introduced reforms in varying mixes, degrees and pacing.³ This diversity has led observers to acknowledge different degrees of interest, trajectories and mixes of initiatives for public sector reform across countries (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2000). This diversity was driven by two things:

- It is now well understood that, when proceeding with reform, countries started from fundamentally different circumstances and with varying degrees of support and engagement on public sector reform from political leaders (Lindquist, 2000; Halligan, 2001, 2007). Not surprisingly, this affected the mix, pacing and overall coherence of reform initiatives. The explanations for these differences include variations in government or state traditions, the priority and interest that governments attached to what Barzelay (2001) refers to as 'public management policy', the substantive policy challenges and goals confronting governments, capabilities, and the actions of other countries functioning as exemplars or points of reference.
- NPM is best understood not as a coherent, integrated programme of reform (Aucoin, 1995; Charih and Daniels, 1997), but as a family of ideas or a collection of

aspirations, instruments and approaches (Barzelay, 2001; Christensen et al., 2007).⁴ These include, for example, a focus on achieving desired results, separating policy capabilities from operations, a focus on service and a customer orientation, providing budget and financial management tools such as accrual accounting systems, increasing flexibility for managers, fostering innovation, encouraging political direction and oversight, using contracts and performance agreements, instituting more competitive appointment regimes, adopting performance regimes, etc. These ideas and approaches can be contradictory (e.g. responsiveness might come at the expense of efficiency, special purpose entities come at the expense of client-oriented service, etc.).

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In short, there have been several streams and variants of NPM initiatives and thinking, and, perhaps to make an obvious point, it is this very diversity that has allowed different governments to design and pace management reform initiatives in unique combinations consistent with existing governance traditions and appetites for reform.

In post-deficit governance environments, with governments in a better position to invest in new policies, greater premium has been attached to improving service to citizens and to the performance of government funding – there is simply less room for governments to cut back services and more incentive for improving their quality. Ensuring value for the expenditure of tax dollars remains important in an era of fiscal rationalisation, and, in this context, so too does political and bureaucratic accountability, particularly with respect to making good on the election commitments of governments. Many governments and academic observers have been arguing that the next wave will consist of integrated, horizontal, joined-up and collaborative government, along with more potent central government (UK Cabinet Office, 2000; Hopkins, Couture and Moore, 2001; 2002; Management Advisory Committee, Australia, 2004; Bakvis and Juillet, 2004; Edwards and Langford, 2002; Christensen and Laegreid, 2007; Halligan, 2007; Shergold, 2007). Intriguingly, despite the many different NPM trajectories of different countries, almost all seem to echo these concerns. However, most of the recent calls for integrated governance, joined-up government and horizontal or collaborative government are aspirations and do not

constitute descriptions of how public service institutions currently work, even if governments can always point to instances or initiatives worth of note.

Many public servants I meet who work in different jurisdictions, while well aware of these calls and ambitions, describe a world where silos prevail due to incentives, vertical lines of accountability, and lack of resources and time for boundary-spanning activity. They would argue that, even if they agree and see the need for horizontal approaches, in their workaday worlds they remain firmly in world of the New Public Management, working hard to implement and maintain a sub-set of those instruments, and continuing to balance them with traditional Westminster expectations of governments (responsiveness to ministers, question period, low tolerance for error when accountability works according to older precepts, etc.). They would see the latest reform ideas as compelling and worthy at one level, but little more than viceroy at another (unless they get to lead a central, coordinating secretariat) and hardly likely to form a wave that rolls through and reshapes their workplaces. Indeed, given that NPM styles of reporting persist as a basis for annual reports and estimates of many governments, it is difficult to ascertain how integrative reform has been realised in the work world of public servants, service delivery agents, and those who they are meant to serve.

Looking back, many of the ideas that are centrepieces of the integrative governance perspective were elements of NPM and earlier thinking. Shared services were part of the NPM family of concepts, either through internal, single-window possibilities or by outsourcing to firms specialising in corporate services. Certainly, the notion of multi-level governance and co-provision of services was part of Canada's alternative service delivery thinking in the early 1990s. Can we forget the earlier notions of 'co-production' and 'co-participation' in the design and delivery of public services? The focus on accountability and performance reaches back to the 1970s as part of the policy and public sector reform movements in many jurisdictions.

Looking forward, the drivers for reform will likely come from policy priorities and other imperatives, not across-the-board public management regimes (can we really have all horizontal or integrated governance on all issues?). Indeed, some issues already driving reform over the last few years include the new security environment flowing from the 9/11 attacks and the war on terrorism, economic and weather-related upheavals, public health crises and prevention regimes to ward off or contain epidemics like avian flu, and the steady stream of possibilities afforded by new technologies and the precipitous decline of financial markets and government finances. In Canada, significant shapers of reform include a series of scandals during the early 2000s that led to an onerous federal accountability regime already in need of reform; demographic change which will prompt new ways

to lead and organise work in public service institutions (e.g. the British Columbia government believes the public service will decrease by one third over its planning horizon); the fact that across the country First Nations have the fastest growing communities and seek control over their destinies; the previous need to move minerals and other resources, leading to the identification and enhancement of transportation gateways and multi-level governance solutions; and, now, the economic tailspin which is leading even the most conservative governments to find new ways for public servants to move funding for infrastructure, however defined, and assistance for various sectors with alacrity.

In short, while there may be a coalescing of interest in integrated governance, it is not clear whether the touted wave is significant in scope or essentially different from the checklist of ideas that we have long had in public sector management. It confirms that we have a multitude of important and often competing ideas and values shaping and informing public management reform initiatives: ideas from Westminster precepts, classical administrative and organisation theory, the public sector reform movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and the New Public Management. It is no wonder that many of the stakeholders of public sector reform might be a bit confused or even cynical.

Narratives and public sector reform

Public administration practitioners and academics are not alone in having a sense of *déjà vu* about the values and ideas underpinning the latest waves of reform. Let's consider three very different perspectives. First, in *Harkoun and the Sea of Stories* (1990) Salman Rushdie imagines a sea filled with snippets and elements of stories that can be picked up by the skilled storyteller to weave and build a new story or narrative for the purposes at hand. Second, most human resource competency frameworks and leadership programmes are strikingly similar in the competencies they address. As a colleague has observed, 'when designing a competency-based professional development programmes, the client will always emphasise three or four competencies, but they are all connected to each other as part of a web. You are focusing on a sub-set for the purposes of design and pulling the others along'. Third, Roe (1993) argued that, in domains with high uncertainty and complexity, policy analysts need to ascertain the positive and anti-narratives swirling around, as well as their logical foundations and degree of completeness, and then try to construct a meta-narrative. There are parallels here, I believe, with the various themes of public sector reform: integration and horizontality may be emphasised, but this does not make irrelevant the rest of the elements of NPM and traditional ideas and values.

There is a common element in the perspectives outlined above: each implies a designer or weaver of a narrative or story for a purpose at hand. Indeed, despite cynicism about

the 'next' acronym or corporate initiative (and let's leave it until later to discuss what it takes for new narratives to burst through this cynicism), there is nevertheless a powerful human yearning for coherence and a compass to guide strategy and work. Many of us would argue that it is a responsibility and sometimes an impulse of political and organisational leadership to provide new narratives to engage followers.

Here I am less interested in identifying all the narratives and values underpinning public sector reform, and more in suggesting that public sector reform can be seen as competing narratives about what should be or has been done. This leads one to explore the different motives and vantage points for developing narratives and, by doing so, we can explain in some measure the multiplicity of and dynamics found in debates over directions for public sector reform. These motivates include the following:⁵

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- governments seeking to establish credibility in the area of public management as one part of the overall image they seek to project, ensuring that the public service is competent in providing advice and implementation, appears under control and accountable as required, and is innovative by international standards;
- top public service leaders seeking to build coherence by providing a picture to the government, public servants and citizens about what capabilities and repertoires it requires to advise governments and manage its renewal, as well as where it has been and where it now stands in these regards;
- reform advocates inside and outside the government and public service seeking to move the organisation in new directions by pointing to failures, lesson-drawing and identifying new models from other jurisdictions, and promoting new frames for understanding issues and possibilities;
- opposition parties, watchdogs and journalists monitoring performance, focusing on error, inefficiency, unresponsiveness, over-promising, inability of public service departments to administer according to the norms and principles espoused by audit agencies, lack of direction from the government and, sometimes, best practices;
- academics, former public servants and think tanks seeking to make sense of reforms (or inability to initiate reforms in response to palpable problems), their internal contradictions, and the ongoing activities and dynamics of public service institutions through description,

comparative analysis, explanation, theory-building, critique and advocacy.

There will be contending perspectives across and within each category on what issues are worthy of debate and potential solutions – a multiplicity of narratives about the quality, priorities and directions that public service institutions should take. Given that public sector institutions are so huge and complex, examining them in aggregate can send mixed messages and constitute a recipe for confusion. Relying only on the narratives of governments and public service leaders can lead to partial pictures of the state of play.

Stepping back, there is a broader narrative to consider. There was general concern and disappointment about the performance of government across the OCED nations by the 1980s in the face of growing deficits and seemingly unresponsive public services. This laid the ground for a more decisive approach by many governments, often leading to significant budget rationalisation and restructuring of programmes. This was a fertile environment for New Public Management ideas, partially informed by perceptions of the superiority of business in grappling with change, and acted on in varying degrees. Given that it took a long time to drift into that mess, Lindquist (1997) suggested that restoring trust or a sense of proportion about the appropriate role and competence of government might be a 20-year proposition. The pendulum will not swing back to where it was, but new notions of public sector roles, approaches to service delivery (Heintzman and Marson, 2005) and engagement with citizens and communities could combine to raise the credibility

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of government and public sector careers among citizens, particularly younger people. The higher-level discourse, which so easily and often celebrates business practice, may begin to even out.

Finally, there are other lenses for making sense of the narratives on public sector reform emanating from sitting governments and public service leadership. These lenses come from a stream of organisation theory literature that emphasises the symbolic and ritual dimensions of organisation life. This concerns not only the use of information but also how organisations alter formal structures and nomenclature to ‘align’ with larger organisational fields in which they compete, collaborate, or seek to maintain status and reputation (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Feldman and March, 1981; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Greenwood and Hinings, 1996; and Christensen et al., 2007). In this sense,

scoping out the next public sector reform initiative may be less about effecting concrete change inside public service institutions and those they serve, and more about being seen to be introducing reform and part of larger national and international discussions. With this in mind, we can see debates and efforts to formulate new strategies as means for:

- showing government and other political leaders that the public service is modern and interested in change;
- indicating to political leaders that the public service can self-reform and securing broad support for, but not too detailed engagement in, reform initiatives;
- demonstrating cohesion across complex and often disaggregated and loosely-coupled multi-organisational public service systems;
- shaping values and providing a sense of proportion, making sense of recent history and complexities, and demonstrating continuity while embracing change;
- promoting pride and recognition in public service institutions, retaining top talent, and attracting new talent;
- developing new narratives and initiatives for engaging counterparts in other jurisdictions bilaterally or multilaterally for prestige and higher-level lesson-drawing; and
- engaging, mimicking, adapting and aligning with the most promising ideas and practices of exemplar and selected referent organisations.

These are not cynical observations: not only do government and public service leaders have an incentive to promulgate new reforms, they have special meaning and purpose in the institutional environments of complex public service systems, with many organisations collectively serving elected governments in different ways. Indeed, it is critically important for institutional leaders to engage in such activity for these very reasons.

However, the flip side of this literature is often ignored: such institutional alignment – in terms of either top structures, announcements or nomenclature – can lead to *de-coupling* of announced initiatives from the technical core of organisations. In other words, what the organisation projects is aligned or rationalised, but it becomes ‘myth’ if it does not run through the organisation. At worst, such strategies can ‘buffer’ technical cores while maintaining good external reputation. This also raises the possibility, then, that narratives and latest candidates and themes for reform initiatives can be out of synch with organisational realities. The next section considers how we capture those realities.

How is government working? Can we ascertain contours and reach?

Before going further, it is worth reiterating that the writing on institutional isomorphism and formal structure as

rationalised myth is one strand of an incredibly diverse literature on organisations. Indeed, that strand arose to counter ecological perspectives depicting the environments of organisations as ‘selecting’ certain structures and approaches (Hannan and Freeman, 1977), and other perspectives that cast the formal structure of organisations as solutions to coordinating the task-structures and relationships among work units comprising the organisation (e.g. Thompson, 1967). Subsequent work suggested that the top-down and bottom-up processes could be working simultaneously (Meyer, Scott and Deal, 1983), but the conclusion that the ‘technical core’ could be de-coupled, at least partially, from the formal and symbolic undertakings of the ‘executive’ remains an important insight.⁶ This suggests that one way to sort out the effectiveness of previous reform initiatives, as well as of better understanding where organisations stand before reforms, requires appreciating their structure at different points in time.

This seems an easy undertaking – after all, programmes and tasks are what organisations do. But one by-product of the NPM focus on performance, which now affects how many governments report on programmes, has been a relatively narrow focus on outputs and outcomes at the expense of more detailed reporting on inputs and activities. High-level figures are provided on inputs, and many reports seem designed to showcase outputs and sometimes outcomes of government programmes. These reports are not only difficult for non-experts to follow on a year-over-year basis, but, more importantly, the level of aggregation is usually quite high, making it difficult for readers to get a good sense of how *specific programmes* work, how many people work in them, and what the precise allocation of resources was for this purpose. And, whatever the merits of accrual accounting from a resource allocation perspective, when combined with a focus on outputs and outcomes this makes more opaque the allocations for specific programmes; only experienced officials can fruitfully read between the lines.

Not surprisingly, it is difficult for observers who try to get underneath the high-level announcements and rhetoric to determine the effect of public reform initiatives. Guiding questions might include: how have the contours of government, departments and specific programmes changed over the years? What is the value-for-money of certain performance levels given resource levels? How well organised are the activities comprising specific programme areas? Auditors-general, of course, try to provide answers to some of the questions, but often this proceeds from a narrow mandate and an accounting perspective, not acknowledging the broader demands on departments and managers, and the emergent quality of public sector work. Rarely do public auditors rely on systematic comparative analysis at this level of detail.

This suggests that finer-grained ways and nomenclature are needed to capture and track the work of governments.

One could simply mandate more detailed reporting by government departments, since the information has to be in the system. Or one could rely on detailed academic studies on specific functions, but these take a long time; and there have been some interesting examples (Christensen and Laegried, 2007; James, 2003; Hood et al., 2004). Some of these studies are selective and idiosyncratic, but they do try to join up high-level themes about reform by on-the-ground comparisons across agencies or jurisdictions.

A third possibility would be to establish a database and taxonomy for categorising and tracking the work of public organisations. Lindquist (1992) reviewed the literature on organisational taxonomies with this latter idea in mind. Even then, though, there was little take-up of earlier efforts to establish taxonomies or of McKelvey’s seminal *Organizational*

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Systematics (1982), owing to the literature’s early focus on informing empirical analyses of assorted organisational variables, and later on developing taxonomies as part of the population ecology movement. No one saw the potential role of organisational taxonomy in the sense discussed here: to categorise and monitor the evolution of specific programmes and their ‘comp pools’ over time and, by implication, which areas were embraced by specific portfolios. To be sure, one cannot understand the evolution of specific programmes without appreciating institutional direction, culture, history and capabilities, but, conversely, we need to get far better at understanding capabilities and innovation from a bottom-up perspective. One could probe assertions about the benefits ascribed to different governance regimes: is it true, for example, that jurisdictions adopting policy–operations splits under NPM have less policy capability than those jurisdictions that did not? Do certain programmes that appeared effective still seem so when compared to other jurisdictions?

Such a strategy would not address the important matter of assessing the evolving ‘reach’ of government through specific programmes. To do this requires going beyond ascertaining the activities and levels of staffing and financial resources to capture the instruments utilised by government bureaux to influence other governments, citizens, organisations, etc. So, for example, a programme area might well decline dramatically in staff size and budget, but oversee a devolved capability such as a service delivery network or public–private partnership. Developing indicators need to be informed by the perspectives of markets, hierarchies and

networks (Powell, 1990). Making such assessments is essential for multi-level governance and collaborative environments across jurisdictions.

Proceeding with such a proposal would be a significant enterprise, involving public servants and academics alike, focusing on certain broad functions (i.e. social service programmes) as a point of departure, and working across countries on a networked basis. However, my main purpose here is not to make a formal proposal for developing a taxonomic classification system for public organisations.

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Rather, I am suggesting that we don't have very good information on the contours and reach of programmes, which creates more room for competing narratives about the progress and possibilities for public sector reform. Institutional themes and narratives will tend to trump programme-level perspectives.

An overlooked opportunity: creatively conveying government

The previous section argued that governments are typically not good at capturing how government programmes evolve over the longer term with respect to how they work and their reach. I would like to suggest that, even if we were collecting that information, we would have difficulty conveying that information to citizens, their elected representatives, and interested observers. Indeed, the next frontier in public management reform might have less to do with what direction it takes (and, yes, there will be labels, acronyms, and overlap with previous initiatives), and more to do with finding novel and interesting ways to convey what it takes to mobilise effort and accomplish associated objectives.

One premise behind NPM and its seeming successor – integrated governance – was that information and communications technology (ICTs) will provide the necessary back-room support and interface software to allow for better service to be provided and for governments to mobilise better across programme boundaries (Borins et al., 2007). Great strides have been made using ICTs and, even though many in the shared services and technology functions of government might believe progress has been too slow with respect to the pace of investments and achieving full integration, the potential remains. However, if one steps back to look more broadly at the directions in which ICTs have gone, we can see that the public sector has failed to explore the potential for animation and graphics technologies for better showcasing how government programmes work.

A review of any annual report or estimates document of a government department or agency should be sufficient to make this point. I grant that many such documents often use fancy graphics and photographs to make key points. However, such documents do not convey succinctly the complexity of how government programmes work, what it takes to mobilise effort within and across governments, what sort of clients a programme is trying to reach, and how all of this works spatially and over time. As noted above, public reporting on the 'guts' of government has declined in the name of a focus on results. Indeed, governments seem to take pride in making themselves less difficult for citizens to understand, an admirable instinct at one level, but this buffers citizens from understanding the complexity, volume and pressures associated with providing the services they receive. In short, it is increasingly difficult for outsiders – whether elected representatives, citizens and stakeholder groups, or academic observers – to ascertain how government is organised and what resources are mobilised to produce programmes, outputs and results. At a recent roundtable on 'Improving Government Accountability' hosted by Victoria University's School of Public Administration, some participants observed that the 'linear and text-based' reporting of governments is out of synch with what younger generations require for engagement, and for many of us too.

We could imagine a different sensibility. The Sunday *New York Times* often contains graphic renderings of background information for a topic of special interest in its 'Week in Review' section. One encounters amazing efforts to convey a large amount of information in a succinct way, but done so as to capture the complexity and provide a sense of proportion. Another prime example is Tufte's *Envisioning Information* (1990) and subsequent books.⁷ Over the last 20 years Tufte has dedicated himself to finding interesting ways to convey information in intriguing and, frankly, beautiful ways. I also recall happening on booths advertising graphics design schools in Federal Plaza in Melbourne a couple of years ago and realising that the professions of architecture and graphics design have used ICTs for years to provide renderings of complex buildings and public space, showing how they relate to users in manifold ways. There has been a missed opportunity: governments have worked hard and made huge investments to apply ICTs to the delivery and re-design of services and to collect information, but, despite the amazing progress and incredible potential in graphics technology, governments have not made parallel investments for the purposes of conveying the complexities of public service institutions more generally, nor the intricacies of coordinating and reaching out to deliver particular services more specifically.

The possibilities for applying ICTs to conveying the complexity of government work seem boundless and exciting. The question here is not whether it can be done, but whether

public institutions will take up the opportunity. Moving in this direction would marry hitherto separate domains: public management innovation and citizen/legislator engagement. Government consultations could be more productive and meaningful if background documents conveyed the current nature of programmes and how they intersect with partners and recipients. When specific instances of error or questions about the performance of government departments arise, a broader perspective on programmes (size, number of transactions, reach, etc.) could put issues in perspective. There would be gains in briefing policy makers and would-be partners on initiatives. And, if done well, it would show how the contours and reach of government had been evolving over time.

1 This article was prepared for a conference on 'After the Reforms: Where Are We Now? Where Are We Headed?', hosted by Victoria University of Wellington's School of Government and the Institute of Public Administration of New Zealand, 28-29 February 2008. The title of

the article plays off Tom Flanagan's book *Waiting for the Wave* (1995), which analysed how Canada's Reform Party was positioning itself to take power in Ottawa.

- 2 This writing from a productive set of colleagues (Christensen et al., 2007a) is only tapping into part of a much broader literature on organisations, and there are other currents that would be of greater interest to practitioners and point to a pragmatic research and action agenda.
- 3 Halligan (2001) shows how different Anglo-American countries had handled reforms over the last 20 years. Considerably more analysis of continental European models has been recently undertaken in the English literature (e.g. Christensen and Laegreid, 2007; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2nd edition, 2004), showing that many countries have long operated on a decentralised basis, and, though not early adopters, have more recently embraced some New Public Management ideas.
- 4 Christensen et al. (2007, p.128) write that NPM is 'not a consistent and integrated theory for modernizing the public sector, but is better characterized as a wave of reforms composed of some principle reform ideas together with a loose cluster of reform initiatives pointing in various directions'.
- 5 This list is expanded and adapted from Lindquist (2006). Its purpose was to create a rendering of the 'Canadian model' of public service. There had been a considerable amount of ink spilled on the Canadian model, although much of the writing, interestingly enough, was not about the public service *per se* and more about various facets of the governance system. Because of the way the debate had evolved, there were different motivations and positions from which ideas about models or narratives were generated.
- 6 We know that hierarchy, attenuated communications, capacity and other priorities create similar gaps.
- 7 For further information on Tufte's other publications, visit the website <http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/>.

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FutureMakers Thought Starters

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