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Abstract

At the end of the day, responsibility for public organization performance rests squarely on the shoulders of its administrators. Like their private sector counterparts, public administrators face many challenges in securing performance from their organizations. The challenges, many critical to the organization’s mission, range from tame to wicked to chaotic. Public administrators are particularly challenged by the dual instrumental and constitutive nature of their roles in governance. Leadership can be conceptualized as one part strategic intent mixed with two parts management. Similarly, governance can be conceptualized as one part government mixed either liberally or conservatively with several parts public values. Performance, however, for public and private organizations alike is usually measured in terms of cold hard results—irrespective of intent or politics. Metrics or private organization performance can be found in the marketplace and return on investment. Correspondingly, metrics for public organization performance can be found in agency mission and responsiveness to public values.

Public leadership is exercised against the backdrop of its political context. Public administration and its administrators span the function and structure of government, serving both as instrumental agents in delivery of governmental goods and services and as constitutive agents of government in relation to its citizens. For decades, many nations have followed the approach of New Public Management to secure high efficiency from public agencies. The idea of New Public Governance is an emergent response to recognition that there is more to governance than mere instrumental efficiency. New Public Governance integrates the constitutive structure and instrumental function of governance by informing and infusing governmental performance with public values.

This article examines where public leadership takes place, its purposes, and its political context—anchoring its practice in the notion of New Public Governance—performance-based governance informed by public engagement and values. A two-dimensional typology of public leadership is posited that arrays locus of action across purposes of action. Personal, organizational, community, and governmental locations of leadership are considered for four basic purposes of leadership: (a) strengthening foundations, (b) forming strategic intent, (c) making strategic interventions, and (d) forming strategic alliances. Adding the political context creates the third dimension of public leadership. This typology creates a terrain where leadership takes place. Doing so explicates public leadership into its respective parts in a way that allows examination of the linkages between each. It allows, for example, consideration of how strategic alliances play out across individual, organizational, community, and governmental perspectives. Similarly, it allows examination of the unfolding logic of leadership actions within each perspective.

This article aims to empower public administrators and invites students, scholars, and practitioners of public leadership to a discussion of performance-based public leadership. It achieves this through close examination of various aspects of leadership so that public leaders can locate themselves and sort out various challenges in their organizations, the community, and their role as government agents in a way that lets them think through how best to achieve organizational performance.
At the end of the day, responsibility for public organization performance rests squarely on the shoulders of its administrators. They, like their private sector counterparts, face significant challenges in securing high performance from their organizations. The challenges, many critical to the organization’s mission, range from tame to wicked to chaotic. Public administrators are additionally challenged by (a) the very public arena in which they operate, (b) multiple levels of accountability, (c) often intense public scrutiny, as well as (d) the dual instrumental and constitutive nature of their roles in governance.

Government performance management is important because the contract made between a government and its citizens is redeemed in significant measure through its executive agencies. Legitimacy of a government, to that measure, is dependent on the ability of public administrators to deliver on the promises of goods and services made by the government to its citizens. Public administrators are additionally charged with tasks of governance which are framed by various philosophies of public administration; regime values, structure and processes; and public values.

**Overview of Three Dimensional Leadership**

There is a constant ebb and flow in the overlap between governance and public administration. While the size and shape of the overlap is continuing work-in-progress for all nations, the idea of high expectations and accountability for government performance—particularly for public administrators—stays constant across all governments. This paper intends to shine a bright light on what constitutes high government performance for public administrators, arguing that truly high government performance is dependent on being informed by public values. To accomplish this task, we explicate both public values and government performance. We argue that high government performance is only achieved by anchoring leadership and management of public agencies to public values both procedurally through citizen engagement and substantively by responsiveness to regime and public values.

Leadership can be conceptualized as one part strategic intent mixed with two parts management. Drucker (2001) asserts that "Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things." Similarly, governance can be conceptualized as one part government mixed either liberally or conservatively with several parts public values. Performance, however, for public and private organizations alike is usually measured in terms of cold hard results—irrespective of intent or politics. Metrics on private organization performance can be found in the market place and return on investment. Correspondingly, metrics for public organization performance can be found in agency mission and responsiveness to regime and public values.

Public leadership is exercised against the backdrop of its political context. Public administrators span the function and structure of government, serving both as instrumental agents in delivery of governmental goods and services and as constitutive agents of government in relation to its citizens. Drucker (Galagan, 1998) has said regarding all leaders that “Leadership has to be grounded in responsibility. It has to be grounded in a Constitution. It has to be grounded in accountability. Otherwise, it will lead to tyranny” (p. 25). Reformulated for our purposes here, a public administrator’s responsibility is to serve his or her government and its public and to be grounded in public and regime values, as well as regime institutions, structures, and processes.
For decades, many nations have followed the approach of New Public Management (NPM) to secure high efficiency from public agencies—the notion of concentrating on executive branch effectiveness. The idea of New Public Governance (NPG) is an emergent response to the commonly experienced recognition that there is more to governance than mere instrumental efficiency. NPG integrates the constitutive structure and instrumental function of governance by building on the efficiencies of NPM for its instrumental benefits and remedying its defects by the constitutive means of informing and improving governmental performance through citizen engagement of various sorts, as well as lateral and vertical coordination within and among governmental entities. Going beyond NPG, this paper focuses on elevating the importance of public values to public administration—more particularly infusing public administration leadership and management performance by anchoring the performance explicitly to public values and engagement.

We examine where public leadership takes place, its purposes, and political context, and it’s relation to management. Its practice is framed in the notion of NPM, NPG, and performance-based governance informed by public engagement and values. A two-dimensional typology of public leadership is posited that arrays locus of action across purposes of action. Personal, organizational, community, and governmental loci are explored as are the following five basic purposes of leadership:

1. Strengthening foundations,
2. Forming strategic intent,
3. Making strategic interventions,
4. Forming strategic alliances, and
5. Institutionalizing change.

The third dimension of leadership arises from adding the political context of governance. Beyond the instrumental provision of goods and services, this third dimension focuses on the constitutive leadership aspects of public administration and its overlap into the political functions of governance.

Adding the classic management functions of planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling to the above typology of leadership creates a terrain where public leadership and management take place. Doing so allows explication of public administration into its respective leadership and management parts in a way that allows examination of the linkages between each. It allows, for example, consideration of how strategic alliances play out across individual, organizational, community, and governmental perspectives. Similarly, it allows examination of the unfolding logic of leadership actions within each perspective and the importance of deploying of organizational resources—management—to bring fruition to the intent of leadership.

This aim of this paper is to empower public administrators and invite students, scholars, and practitioners of public leadership to a discussion around performance-based public leadership. It achieves this through close examination of various aspects of leadership so that public leaders can locate themselves and sort out the various challenges embedded in their organizations, the community, and their role as government agents in a way that lets them think through how best to achieve high organizational performance informed by public values.
Explication of Public Values

Public values are socially constructed and are formed, held, and expressed through a variety of social institutions which are “complex social forms that reproduce themselves such as governments, the family, human languages, universities, hospitals, business corporations, and legal systems” (Miller, 2011, p. 1). Figure 1, below, depicts a terrain where public values are formed and held and shows how they are instrumentally expressed by people in particular situations. Regimes as institutions form and hold values that are of particular importance to public administrators in that they are agents of the government by which they are employed. In the figure below, regime values are shown to transcend some, but not necessarily all institutions where values are formed and held—think, for example, about the relationship between the values held by an environmental activist non-governmental organization that are not shared by regime which is the object of their influence. Although the Figure depicts perhaps an orderly flow from abstract institutions that form and hold values to their concrete expression, the real world is a more chaotic and uncertain place both for people who hold values and public administrators who often must respond to them. Expression of values by particular people in particular situations can be seen as merely the tip of multiple invisible icebergs (institutions) of which the people situationally expressing values are only dimly aware, if they have any awareness at all, of the institutions which formed and holds the values they are expressing. In our conception the social construction and expression of public values are underlain by foundational societal values.

Figure 1
Administrative discretion is bound by laws that create public agencies with carefully prescribed missions to be redeemed through carefully prescribed laws, rules, and regulations. It is the instrumental duty of public administrators to follow these laws, rules, and regulations. Politicians are reserved the right of making the laws—with the exception of where legal provision is made for agencies to promulgate their own rules or regulations. Morgan, Green, Shinn, and Robinson (2008) press the point that “public administration shares in the ethical obligation to foster civic engagement”, but distinguish that it is not an administrator’s job to create community, but rather redeem their responsibilities as “part of the political community, a manifestation of its life” (p. 104). They quote Cooper (1991) in defining the role of government “to provide a supportive environment in which [a pluralism of communities (square brackets in original)] may flourish” (p. 161). They also point out that political and public pressures create a much broader agenda for agencies which simply do not allow for such a narrow scope of agency actions—hence the constitutive role of public administrators and agencies.

Morgan et al. (2008) point out that public administrators’ roles with regard to communities “entails more facilitation and co-production than expert, managerial direction” (p. 105). They suggest, referring to Cooper (1991), that three virtues should guide public administrators in redeeming their responsibilities to communities: (a) public spiritedness—an orientation toward valuing and respecting rights and obligations of citizens, (b) prudence or practical judgment in relating principles to concrete
action and good ends to appropriate means, and (c) substantive rationality—the ability to reason about the ends of governmental actions, inherent value assumptions and instrumental rationality.

Morgan et al. (2008) create the notion of a democratic balance wheel of administrative responsibility to guide exercise of public administrator discretion beyond strict legal prescription and electoral accountability to citizens. The balance wheel, see Table 1 below, gives administrators the space to remedy four potential problems in the American form of government: (a) excessive exercise of official power, (b) excessive exercise of power by tyrannical majorities, (c) incapacity of government to act energetically or competently, or (d) lack of citizen engagement. Corresponding administrative remedies include respectively (a) The Articles of Confederation, administrative and populist traditions of government (b) the federalist, progressive, and entrepreneurial legacies, (c) Federalist, New Deal, Great Society, and strong legal legacies, and (d) Anti-Federalist and Great Society legacies.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threats</th>
<th>Governmental Power</th>
<th>Citizen Power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too much government power</td>
<td>Too little government power</td>
<td>Too much power of a tyrannical majority over a minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too little government power</td>
<td>Systematic planning, efficiency, effectiveness, professional civil service</td>
<td>Rights for minorities, due process, open accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsive government mediated by a variety of checks and balances</td>
<td>Rights for minorities, due process, open accountability</td>
<td>Citizen engagement, co-production, decentralization, face-to-face government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public Administration Framed by Philosophy and Regime

Society holds public administration in two institutions. The foundational institution that exists in the real world is the field of practice of public administration which implements the policy of government. The second institution exists in the academy and is the academic discipline that has as its subject matter the field of practice of public administration. Both are embedded in the broader socio-political institution of governance—one institution aimed at its exercise, the other at its study. In the real world, public administration exists at every level of government. The nature of work differs dramatically, for example, between a National Security Council and a local county roads department, but from a functional standpoint, administrators in both cases are the agents—in the sense of principal agent theory—of the governments which employ them. In a practical sense, public administrators do the work of their governments—they are where the rubber meets the road. A modicum of a systems approach is useful for better understanding the nexus between public administration and governance; namely structure, process, and function, where (a) structure names the moving parts, (b) process connects the parts and explains how they move, and (c) function describes the outcomes.

The Nexus of Public Administration and Governance

Each regime nominally defines a particular overlap between governance and public administration through its own structures, processes, and values. In reality however as discussed above,
and as each public administrator intimately knows, the actual emergent overlap is a function of complex and interdependent interactions of the nominal structure and function of the public administration system with its political, social, economic, legal, and historically path-dependent environment.

**Governance.** Jreisat (2011) characterizes the structure of governance as the system of authority which specifies the capacity and orientation of institutions and organizations of governance toward efficiency, effectiveness, engagement of citizens, and legitimacy. He characterizes the process of governance as the rules and authenticity of decision-making with the expectation that the process is oriented to delivering “equitable outcomes of public policy and to promote common interests” (p. 425). He also notes the universal problem of the process being captured by powerful special interests to serve narrow objectives rather than the greater public good. Jreisat characterizes the function of governance as outcomes measured by the quality and quantity of the overall results of governance: “public service delivery, attaining sustainable development, and improving the attributes of civil society” (p. 425). He observes that outcomes demonstrate accountability of public decision making and reflect the level of commitment to equity as well as the application of law and justice.

Jreisat summarizes that while governance is a complex web of structures, processes, and outcomes; its purpose is to consistently and equitably respond to society’s needs and demand. He points out that fidelity to prescribed rules and processes, however, is not an assurance of the quality or effectiveness of outcomes. More particularly, he argues that procedural accountability is not equivalent to performance accountability and that “over-conformance and excessive compliance to rules and procedures are known to create rigidities, undermine creativity, and weaken performance . . . [as] revealed in the literature on dysfunctions of bureaucratic systems” (p. 425). Jreisat discusses core values of governance (p. 432-434) which are paraphrased below. He asserts that good governance:

1. Is based on ethics and accountability;
2. Creates trust and promotes broadly shared values including accountability, openness, and transparency;
3. Establishes an overall framework of collective and strategic goals, interpretations, and shared values, both within government and across society;
4. Is based on constructs of rules and legal standards for orderly conduct and progressive social transformation;
5. Creates adaptive political and administrative forms and perspectives of organization and management; and
6. Embodies the capacity to act in the public interest.

Kennett (2009) in Osborne (2009) observes that “New forms of relationship and interaction between state and society, governments and citizens, and state and not-state institutions have emerged” and that the term governance “facilitates an understanding of the ways in which power penetrates policy spaces, processes and practices, and the formal and informal institutional arrangements” (p. 19) which have emerged.
Public Administration. Philosophies of public administration have evolved for over three thousand years, starting with the Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BCE) and reaching high form with the Chinese Imperial examination system instituted in the Sui Dynasty (581-618 CE). The Imperial exams were designed to select the best people to be civil administrative officials irrespective of social class and connections—which created its own class of scholar-bureaucrats. Modern public administration, having progressed, as discussed earlier, from classic public administration, through NPM, and arguably NPG, has arrived at an interesting Gestalt that is not unlike the Chinese tradition of scholar-bureaucrats. Lynn (2011), in a theoretical piece on the epistemology, critical evaluation, and practice integrates the academic study and practice of public administration by concluding that

“As a practical matter—as a matter of professional ethos—theory-based empirical research in public administration is most usefully regarded as a potentially credible source of heuristics for practice, that is, as a source of stimulants to constructive, creative, or critical thought . . . and, if suitably vetted, for action” (p. 19).

The structure of the practice of public administration, in addition to its philosophical basis, includes, referring to Figure 1 above, the system of authority under which administrators operate, political mandates, public needs and values. The process includes leadership in forming intent about how to best deploy authorities and charges and management in making decisions, organizing, implementing, and controlling resources to provide goods and services. The function includes the provision of goods and services for public consumption, and more broadly the emergent strategic outcome of governance within the existing authority and political context.

Osborne suggests that NPM has been a transitory stage in the evolution of traditional public administration to the NPG. He characterizes the core elements of NPG, PA, and NPM with respect to theoretical roots, concept of the state, focus of intentions and emphasis, resource allocation mechanism, system characteristics and value base. This explication is useful in that it historically locates the various currents of public administration that are currently in play. In addition, he sets the stage for understanding the path dependence of the current emergent practice of public administration—its dependence on the decisions made in the past which inexorably shape today’s and tomorrow’s choices. It also provides a way to articulate public-value based government performance management. Borrowing the approach from Osborne, we describe the distinguishing characteristics of classic PA, NPM, NPG, and the public values-based government performance that we argue for in this paper as shown in Table 2, below. Consistent with Osborne’s notion of evolution, our concept of public-values based performance depends and builds on earlier forms of public administration.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distinguishing Characteristics</th>
<th>Nation Building</th>
<th>Classical Public Administration</th>
<th>New Public Management</th>
<th>New Public Governance</th>
<th>Public Values-Based Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Basis</td>
<td>Regime Theory</td>
<td>Political Science, Public Policy</td>
<td>Rational/Public Choice Theory, Management Science</td>
<td>Institutional, Network, Theory of Agency,</td>
<td>Political Economy, Regime Theory, Complex Interdependence,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflecting on the progression of notions of public administration from nation-building, classical public administration, through NPM and NPG, it becomes apparent that the evolution of public administration can be considered as an extension of public administration into the domain of governance. This nexus can thus be considered as the functional map of public administration onto governance. Defined thusly, the nexus between the two is displayed in Table 3, below.

Table 3

The Functional Nexus between Public Administration and Governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition of Public Administration’s Role in Governance</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Staffing agencies based on competence rather than influence</td>
<td>Classical Public Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. General restriction of government agencies to administration rather than formulation of policy</td>
<td>Classical Public Administration, New Public Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Checks and balances to sharpen purpose and increase effectiveness</td>
<td>New Public Management, Classical Public Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Emphasis on customer (citizen) service</td>
<td>New Public Management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Fostering the ability of agencies to learn and adapt | New Public Management
8. Emphasis on executive branch professionalism and managerial competency | New Public Management
9. Shift to a focus on nature of instruments rather than agencies and their programs | New Governance
10. Shift in organizational form from hierarchy to network | New Governance
11. Shift from public vs. private to public and private | New Governance
12. Shift from command and control to cooperation | New Governance
13. Shift from management skills to enablement skills | New Governance
14. Shift from sole agency provision to co-production of goods and services | Co-Production
15. Providing a constitutive role of citizen engagement in governance | New Public Governance
16. Emphasis on duty to serve and engage citizens | New Public Governance
17. Providing a constitutive role of community leadership | New Public Governance
18. Government performance anchored to public values | Beyond New Public Governance

Note: 1 With the exception of policy formulation and regulation process prescribed for agencies by law.

**Emergent Instrumental Governance**

Larsen (2008a) articulated a Theory of Agency of Public Administrators that captures the responsibility of a public administrator to follow regime structures, processes, and values; as well as public values. Constitutional American federal governance, for example, is built upon a foundation of four pillars. The first three are the main branches of government—the legislature, the executive branch, and the courts—with their associated separation of powers and checks and balances created in the American federal system. The fourth pillar is fealty to rights granted citizens by the Tenth amendment of the Constitution. It is then a small leap to transform these pillars to principles in formulating a Theory of Agency for Public Administrators. While the principle-based articulation of duty expressed as four dicta emerge from an American context, I submit that this theory has broader application for other regimes.

1. **Legislative Directive.** Charge to action and constraint created by the mission of particular agencies as defined in organic or authorizing legislation for the agency and further constrained by other appurtenant laws, as well as yearly appropriations containing both operating funds and direction;
2. **Executive Directive.** Charge to action and constraint by the President and his or her administration, including the body of policy and federal regulation;
3. **Judicial Directive.** Charge to action and constraint by the federal courts in their constitutional charge of interpreting Congressional mandates and the constitutionality of laws and government actions;
4. **Fealty to Citizens.** Duty to (a) serve citizens as directed through agency mission as modulated by laws, policy, regulation, and court decisions, (b) to engage citizens in participation in decision making as outlined in various laws, regulation, and policy, and (c) more broadly, to serve as an interface between citizens and their government within the mission area of their agency.

Consistent with our discussion of the constitutive and instrumental aspects of a public administrator’s job, similar to the explication of public values in Figure 1 above, we want to explicate the social construction and expression of the instrumental aspect of governance shown as Figure 2, below. Governance, in our framing, is created by and is an expression of regime structures, processes, and values in interaction with philosophies of public administration. While our framing may be viewed by some as too narrow, it is created from the perspective of a public administrator who is duty-bound to follow the strictures of regime processes and structures and to be responsive to regime values. This concept of duty reflects the Theory of Agency for Public Administrators above.

Philosophies of public administration, regime structures and process, as well as government agencies and agents are shown in the figure to all be grounded in regime values. While resultant programs, projects, and services are also a reflection of regime values, they take on a life of their own—they stand on their own merits, so to speak in the eyes of the people which they are intended to serve. The social construction is arrayed from the abstract on the left to the concrete on the right. Similar to the construction and expression of values, the instrumental expression of governance is underlain by foundational societal values. A gap is shown between instrumental governance and foundational values to represent the fact that governance is not grounded explicitly in public values at every turn. Philosophies of public administration are expressed in regime structures and processes to the extent they are embraced by the regime. From the regime arises government entities—agencies and agents—who develop and administer agency programs from which flow government projects and services. People then react to such projects and services expressing satisfaction or problems and conflicts or typically both. These interactions are situational expressions of public values held by citizens. Having proceeded down two different paths, social construction and expression of public values and instrumental governance, we have arrived at the same point—situational expression of public values. These expressions hold a privileged place in our thinking because they are the same tip of two different icebergs representing the intersection of public values with instrumental governance. They are thus, in our judgment, the key to high government performance in that if both public leadership and management are firmly anchored in public values we have created a system of regime-centered public administration leadership and management that is self-correcting around publicly held values.

Figure 2

*Social Construction and Expression of Instrumental Governance*
The Unique Challenge of Public Administration

Public administrators are faced by a plethora of problems which come in every size, shape, and complexity. Some are relatively straightforward others are confoundedly wicked. Reflecting on experiences of public administrators both in China and the U.S., the author in concert with colleagues at Portland State and Lanzhou Universities created a typology of such problems. There seem to be two dimensions that are useful in segregating the problems faced by public administrators. The first is complexity, the second is conflicts in values. While it sometimes takes significant management and leadership effort to resolve complex problems, these seemed to be the bread and butter of public administration. The difficulties seemed to arise when value conflicts were overlain on complexity. When high complexity is matched with high value conflicts, truly difficult challenges emerge for administrators. A simple typology based on this dichotomy between complexity and conflicts in values is shown in Table 4, below. Quadrant one characterizes problems with low complexity and low conflicts in values. Quadrant two increases only the complexity while quadrant three increases only the value conflicts. Quadrant four has both high complexity and high value conflicts. This particular dichotomy proved useful in discriminating a variety of aspects of such problems as discussed below.

Table 4

Dichotomy between Complexity and Value Conflicts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complexity</th>
<th>Low Value Conflicts</th>
<th>High Value Conflicts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low Complexity</td>
<td>High Complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Value Conflicts</td>
<td>High Value Conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low Complexity</td>
<td>Low Complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Value Conflicts</td>
<td>Medium Value Conflicts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dimensions of the Public Administration Leadership and Management Challenge

From the simple array of four different types of problems faced by administrators, the first point that arose in discussion with my colleagues was that problems in quadrant four are the epitome of wicked problems. It was generally agreed that even complex problems are not wicked if value conflicts are low, but that even simple problems with conflicts in values became wicked to the extent that conflicts in values are not easily reconcilable or if the value conflicts were moral conflicts. Wickedness in management problems was first discussed in the literature by Churchman (1967) who quoted a colleague, Professor Horst Rittel of the University of California, in describing wicked problems as follows.
Wicked Problems . . . refer to that class of social system problems which are ill-formulated, where the information is confusing, where there are many clients and decision makers with conflicting values, and where the ramifications in the whole system are thoroughly confusing. The adjective "wicked" is supposed to describe the mischievous and even evil quality of these problems, where proposed "solutions" often turn out to be worse than the symptoms. (p. B-141)

Rittel and Webber (1973) formally describe wicked problems as those that have the following attributes:

1. There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem—they are unbounded;
2. Wicked problems have no stopping rule—indeterminate solutions;
3. Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but good-or-bad;
4. There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem;
5. Every wicked problem solution is a “one-shot operation” with no opportunity for trial and error;
6. Wicked problems do not have an enumerable set of potential solutions;
7. Every wicked problem is essentially unique;
8. Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem;
9. The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem’s resolution; and
10. The planner [decision-maker] has no right to be wrong.

Any Solutions to wicked problems, almost by definition, are in the eyes of the beholder. It is clear that problems in quadrant four can be fairly characterized as wicked. Problems in quadrant one are often not exactly simple, but can always be characterized as straightforward—acknowledging that such problems may take a lot of work to resolve. Problems in quadrant two can be simply characterized as complex. Problems arising from quadrant three, even though there may be few moving parts, often prove to be difficult to resolve because even though a problem and its solution may be simple, it is often that case that the values or moral conflicts are deeply held. Because of this difficult may be a good characterization for problems in quadrant three. This discussion results in a problem characterization as shown in Table 5, below.

Table 5
Problem Types Based on the Dichotomy of Complexity and Value Conflicts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complexity</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Quadrant Two</td>
<td>Quadrant Four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Quadrant One</td>
<td>Quadrant Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Straightforward</td>
<td>Difficult</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the discussion around the four types of challenges facing public administrators ensued a more detailed description of the four types of problems as shown in Table 6, below. Delving deeper into the differences between problem types, discussion among colleagues revealed the differences between problems as shown in Table 7, below. First, taking a look at the problems from a values perspective, straightforward problems were agnostic because any values were implicit and not spoken about by the various players. Complex problems had explicit relatively simple values—typically in a situation where multiple organizations or sub-organizations are involved and the values are obvious to the players when spoken, e.g. a roads department might care about safety standards and a financial department might care about overall cost—efficiency. Difficult low complexity problems were considered difficult because of associated explicit value conflicts, while wicked problems are wicked because of unlimited explicit value conflicts and high complexity. It became apparent From a systems viewpoint that straightforward problems, from the perspective of the administrator, are mono-centric and while complex problems had multiple centers because of multiple players, all the players were inwardly focused toward their own organization or sub-organization.
Table 7

**Comparison of Four Types of Problems Faced by Public Administrators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Straightforward</th>
<th>Complex</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
<th>Wicked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value Orientation</strong></td>
<td>Agnostic values</td>
<td>Explicit values</td>
<td>Limited explicit Value conflicts</td>
<td>Unlimited explicit Value conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>System Orientation</strong></td>
<td>Mono-centric Internal focus</td>
<td>Polycentric Internal focus</td>
<td>Mini-centric External focus</td>
<td>Polycentric External focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership Actions</strong></td>
<td>Output management</td>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>Interest-based conflict resolution</td>
<td>Diplomacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus of Leadership Actions</strong></td>
<td>Management within an organization</td>
<td>Coordination among organizations</td>
<td>Forging collective horizontal leadership</td>
<td>Forging collective vertical and horizontal leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Results of Leadership</strong></td>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Agreement on actions</td>
<td>Agreement on the nature of the problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance Unit of Analysis</strong></td>
<td>Outputs</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Conflict Resolution</td>
<td>Consensus building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transactions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership Archetype</strong></td>
<td>Tactical and Operational Management</td>
<td>Strategic Management</td>
<td>Strategic Leadership</td>
<td>Transformational Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophy of Public Administration</strong></td>
<td>Classic Public Administration</td>
<td>New Public Management</td>
<td>New Public Governance</td>
<td>Beyond New Public Governance*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* NPM to tame complexity, NPG to tame value conflicts, Explicit framing and grounding in public values.

Leadership for straightforward problems was judged to be aimed at management within an organization for the purposes of efficiently managing outputs. Leaders’ focus for complex problems is on management among multiple organizations for the purposes of effectively creating joint outcomes among the parties. For difficult problems, in the face of conflicting values, leaders focus on forging collective horizontal leadership—for parallel organizations or interests—for the purposes of interest-based conflict resolution leading to agreement among the parties on actions to take. For wicked problems however, having multiple players and unlimited explicit value conflicts, leaders use diplomacy to forge collective vertical and horizontal leadership within and between organizations to reach agreement on the nature of the problem and agreement on the nature of the solution.

Leaders employ tactical and operational management for straightforward problems with the performance unit of analysis being outputs and transactions. Straightforward problems are the domain of classical public administration. Leaders employ strategic management for complex problems with the performance unit of analysis being outcomes in the domain of NPM. Difficult problems require strategic
leadership within the domain of NPG to decide which value conflicts need resolution and how they are best resolved. Wicked problems require multiple facets of leadership using the principles of NPM to help tame the problems—sort out which conflicts are worthy of organizational energy to resolve—and the principles of NPG to help solve them. Leadership for wicked problems requires transformational leadership beyond NPG to segregate problems, enlist support of stakeholders, reframe intractable problems into solvable problems, and to build sufficient agreement through processes around public values to allow forward progress—reaching agreement on the nature of the problems and agreement on the nature of the solutions.

Public Administration Leadership and Management

Neither leadership nor management is a new concept. Some argue that leadership is certainly not in the domain of management, while others argue that good managers must also lead, and still others that good leaders must also manage. For the purposes of our study, we argue that leadership and management are inextricably woven together. One is steering, the other is rowing. Public administrators, in our experience and our research, report that they have a duty to both steer and row. Administrators report that they lead (conceive of and set organizational direction) and manage (deploy organizational resources to accomplish instrumental organizational ends). For our purposes we choose a commonly accepted management model well-articulated by Drucker (Peter Ferdinand Drucker, 1986) that the management function is comprised of planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling. Leadership is a little more problematic in that there is not a commonly accepted view of what exactly comprises leadership. For the purposes of this project, we will spend a little time developing the leadership model we use.

Integrating Leadership and Management

At the end of the day, responsibility for public organization performance rests squarely on the shoulders of its administrators. Like their private sector counterparts, public administrators face many challenges in securing performance from their organizations. The challenges, many critical to the organization’s mission, range from tame to wicked to chaotic. Public administrators are particularly challenged by the dual instrumental and constitutive nature of their roles in governance. Leadership can be conceptualized as one part strategic intent mixed with two parts management. Similarly, governance can be conceptualized as one part government mixed either liberally or conservatively with several parts public values. Performance, however, for public and private organizations alike is usually measured in terms of cold hard results—irrespective of intent or politics. Metrics of private organization performance can be found in the market place and return on investment. Correspondingly, metrics for public organization performance can be found in agency mission and responsiveness to public values.

Public leadership is exercised against the backdrop of its political context. Public administration and its administrators span the function and structure of government, serving both as instrumental agents in delivery of governmental goods and services and as constitutive agents of government in relation to its citizens. For decades, many nations have followed the approach of NPM (Kettl, 2000) to secure high efficiency from public agencies. The idea of NPG (Larsen, 2008a) (Osborne, 2009) (Brookes &
Grint, 2010) is an emergent response to recognition that there is more to governance than mere instrumental efficiency. NPG integrates the constitutive structure and instrumental function of governance by informing and infusing governmental performance with public engagement and public values.

This article examines where public leadership and management takes place, their purposes and political context—anchoring their practice in the notion of NPG—performance-based governance informed by public engagement and values. A two-dimensional typology of public leadership is posited that arrays locus of action across purposes of action. The venues of leadership considered are personal, organizational, community, and governmental. Five basic leadership purposes are considered: (a) strengthening foundations, (b) forming strategic intent, (c) making strategic interventions, (d) forming strategic alliances, and (e) institutionalizing change. Adding the political context of governance creates the third dimension of public leadership.

If we consider the leadership functions articulated above and add to them the classic management functions of planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling, we create a terrain where leadership and management takes place. Doing so explicates public administration leadership and management into its respective parts in a way that allows examination of the linkages between each, thus allowing full consideration of the third dimension of leadership—governance. This schema allows then, for example, consideration of how strategic alliances play out across individual, organizational, community, and governmental perspectives. Similarly, it allows examination of the unfolding logic of leadership actions within each perspective.

Public administrators are responsible for that part of government performance that resides in public agencies. The resultant framework for public administration leadership and management, as shown in Table 8, below, explicates the elements that can be specified and thus measured to assess specific government performance for which public administrators are responsible. Leadership in this frame is strategic, performing the overall function of steering—deciding which work gets done and why. In public administration these kinds of actions are characterized by Morgan (Morgan et al.) and others as constitutive. Management, in this conceptualization, is tactical and operational, performing the overall function of rowing—getting work done. Public administration in this sense is more instrumental.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening Foundations</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forming Intent</td>
<td>Organizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestrating Change</td>
<td>Implementing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forging Collaborations</td>
<td>Controlling (monitoring)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We argue that coupling public values to government performance is necessary to secure high government performance. Each government performance management element for public administrators shown in Table 8 above has a corresponding action to be responsive to public values as shown in Table 9 below. Taken together, the table below shows the elements of leadership and management for public values that takes government performance beyond NPG.

Table 9

*Public Administrator Leadership and Management for Public Values*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Element</th>
<th>Corresponding Public Value Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening Foundations</td>
<td>Building organizational recognition and understanding of the importance of public values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forming Intent</td>
<td>Consideration of relevant public values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestrating Change</td>
<td>Embracing and giving voice to relevant public values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forging Collaborations</td>
<td>Seeking public collaborations and giving voice to relevant public values to collaborators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalizing Change</td>
<td>Building in a pre-disposition to recognizing, giving voice to, and responding to public values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Involving citizens and stakeholders in planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing</td>
<td>Organizing with consideration of responsiveness to public values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing</td>
<td>Coproduction and collaboration with explicit recognition of public values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling (monitoring)</td>
<td>Providing for citizen and stakeholder involvement in monitoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling (taking)</td>
<td>Take corrective actions responding to and being mindful of public values.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Institutionalizing Change  Controlling (taking corrective actions)
Venues and Purposes of Leadership

Leadership was segregated above into locus of leadership actions and purpose of leadership actions. The locus of leadership actions is merely an extension of the notion that leadership has both a personal dimension (improving leadership skills of individual leaders) and an organizational dimension—the actual purposeful steering and managing of organizations. The extension is merely a logical extension of public administration in that any public organization is set in a community either of interest or place, or both, and has varying degrees of interaction with its community. The notion is further extended in that any public organization is, by definition, an extension of the government which created it. I distinguish here between a governmental location of leadership from a broader integrative function of governance which will be discussed separately as part of the third dimension of leadership. The origin of purposes of leadership actions offered here is a heuristic that has emerged from the author’s career-long quest of learning about leadership through its study and practice. Philosophically, the author’s orientation to leadership is very similar to Heifetz and Laurie’s (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001, p. 131): “Followers want comfort, stability, and solutions from their leaders. But that’s babysitting. Real leaders ask hard questions and knock people out of their comfort zones. Then they manage the resulting distress” (p. 131).

Vector of Change Systems Model. I developed a Vector of Change organizational model that blends management science, systems science, and public administration perspectives. I formalized the model drawing from the literature above regarding systems science and organization theory. The actual working model upon which the formal model is based, however, was developed, used, and refined over the course of my more than thirty year career. The Vector of Change systems model (Larsen, 2008b) animates a simple classic closed input-process-output system by simply placing it in and connecting it to its boundary conditions.

The model captures Habermas’ (1972, 1974, 1979) views, that there are two fundamental conditions underpinning human society and culture: work and interaction. The “work” here is the simple input/process/output system, and the “interaction” is the process of forming intent and observing and reflecting on the second order effects, as well as their effects on the greater world, that arise from accomplishment of work. “Forming intent” is the contemplation of work to initiate change as shown in Figure 3. The existing situation corresponds to boundary conditions, or social milieu, relevant to the input/process/change system under consideration. The new situation corresponds to the desired change in state of the existing situation which will be caused, in part, by operation of the vector of change and, in part, by exogenous factors. “Forming intent” is the linkage between the existing situation and initiation of a change sequence. It provides a mechanism to capture the beginnings of the dynamism leading ultimately to a purposeful attempt to cause change. “Second order effects” emanate from first order system outputs and are the linkages between the first order outputs and any change in the greater outside world. A way is thus provided to systematically describe the linkages between primary
first order outputs and the new situation. Three feedback loops are described\(^1\), which perform the following functions: (a) negative feedback provides course correction information, (b) positive feedback provides destination correction information, and (c) meta-feedback provides information that alters the system itself. The three main units of analysis are the existing situation, the new or desired situation, and the vector of change. Subunits of analysis are: (a) input, process, and output of the vector of change; (b) linkages of forming intent and second order effects; and (c) feedback loops linking outcomes and the various elements. G. Morgan’s and Beer’s approaches to systems informed the development of my Vector of Change systems model. Mintzberg’s organizational system and my Vector of Change model are used to characterize and describe organizational structure and function as part of my measurement model. They are used as part of the instruments for agency administrator interviews and assessment of partnership agreements. With regard to the management functions of planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling, the input of the vector of change corresponds to planning. The process of operational activities includes both organizing and implementing. Controlling includes both monitoring and taking corrective action. Monitoring in the vector of change model is the feedback loops, including operational, tactical, and strategic. Taking corrective actions take place in operational processes, in articulation and changing of tactical goals and operational objectives, and in the case of strategic corrective actions changing intent or strategic goals.

Figure 3

**Vector of Change Model**

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**Strengthening foundations.** Strengthening foundations has its roots in the stewardship responsibilities that any leader has toward his or her organization to improve both the capacity of the

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\(1\) Negative and positive feedback loops are use here in the general systems theory approach of characterizing feedback. Feedback is "negative" when information is supplied back to the system that it is off course, as in an autopilot. Positive feedback means that while you might be on the right course, your destination may not be right, i.e., the destination airport might be fogged in and an alternative landing spot needs to be found. Both feedback loops are internal to and part of the system under consideration. Meta-feedback loops are related to but outside the system under consideration and function to change the system itself.
people within the organization as well as the organization’s capacity to perform its various functions. In the Vector of Change model shown above, the foundations are located in the existing internal situation. Improving the capacity of individuals within an organization falls under the purview of developmental training which takes many forms including mentoring of employees by their leaders. Barnard (Barnard, 1938, 1968) formulated a comprehensive theory of cooperative behavior in organizations that explains why people cooperate and offers deep insights into the coordination of human activity towards collective goals. It is, according to Barnard, about people working together because they want to.

Drucker (Peter Ferdinand Drucker, 1986), often characterized as the father of modern management, offers the idea that a manager/leader’s role is to plan, organize, implement, and control to accomplish the goals of the organization. It is, according to Drucker, about people working together in an organized fashion. If a leader wants particular organizational performance or change, the leader must (a) lead people to see what is in it for them (Barnard) and (b) create an organizational pathway so people know what to do and when (Drucker). This idea is also reflected in Blake and Mouton’s (1964) Managerial Grid which arrays concern for people in a grid against concern for production. Strengthening foundations also has a personal corollary in the responsibility a leader has to improve his or her own skills through professional leadership development and to take leadership actions in as efficacious a manner as possible.

**Forming Intent.** Having been an avid student of leadership since 1980, the author has observed that the single most crucial aspect of leadership is the act of forming intent. I define forming intent in this context similar to Heifetz and Laurie (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001) who articulate the first and second principles of adaptive leadership as being “able to view patterns as if they were on a balcony” (p. 132) and to identify the adaptive challenge. More formally, I define the act of forming intent as identifying the few critical challenges on which an organization’s survival or future vitality depend and determining how the organization can best position itself to face the challenges. Referring to Figure 3, above, forming intent involves getting on the balcony to take stock of the internal organizational situation, the external situation, identifying the critical challenges, and envisioning the desired future internal or external situation or both; and articulating strategic intent that captures how the organization can best respond.

**Orchestrating Change.** Orchestrating strategic interventions has two aspects: the first is conceiving the necessary change and secondly orchestrating the change. Kotter (1996) articulates an eight stage process of change that fits nicely with the elements of leadership for public administrators outlined in this paper as shown in Table 10 below. The imperative of leadership-led change is necessary because change in organizations does not happen easily for a long list of reasons well-articulated by Kotter (p. 20) to include high costs, imperfect results, inwardly focused cultures, paralyzing bureaucracy, parochial politics, low trust, lack of teamwork, arrogance, lack of management leadership, and fear of change. Orchestrating change is essentially the deployment of organizational resources to meet the changes envisioned by the leader. In the vector of change model, it is the vector of change itself with input of tactical goals and operational objectives, the chosen process for operational activities—whether it be in-house, contracted out, procured off-the-shelf, or through a partnership, and the actual output itself of tactical outcomes.
Table 10

The Relationship of Leadership for Government Performance to Kotter’s Eight Stage Change Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kotter’s Eight Stages of Change</th>
<th>Form Intent</th>
<th>Orchestrate Change</th>
<th>Institutionalize Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Establish sense of urgency</td>
<td>4. Communicate the change vision</td>
<td>7. Consolidate gains and produce more change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Create guiding coalition</td>
<td>5. Empower broad-based action</td>
<td>8. Anchor new approaches in the culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Develop vision and strategy</td>
<td>6. Generate short-term wins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Forging Collaboration.** Forging collaboration includes citizen co-production as outlined by Bovaird (2005), cooperative arranges with other governmental agencies, stakeholder engagement, and public/private partnerships. Strategic alliances upon which collaboration is based are formed using an interest-based approach outlined below.

1. Identify your own organization’s interests clearly;
2. Identify the areas where your organizational is challenged or needs help;
3. Identify or grow potential partners who can help out;
4. Try some initial collaborations; and
5. Try more extensive collaborations in areas where there is mutual success.

In such an approach, an organization identifies its own interests clearly related to the challenge at hand and identifies its own strengths and weaknesses. The next step is to determine those areas where collaboration would be useful, establishing why it would be useful to collaborate. Potential partners are considered that have the identified strengths. Initial collaborations are tried to determine the fit, and finally, more collaborations are pursued where there is mutual beneficial gain. Strategic partnerships are those where a partnership is pursued in an organization’s area of critical challenges. Strategic partners then, by extension, are those upon whose success your own organization depends for its success.

**Institutionalizing Change.** Kotter, cited above, outlines the importance of consolidating gains as a platform to produce more change—in our case in areas of critical organizational challenges—and of anchoring new approaches brought on by change in the organization’s culture to ensure that the change is enduring. In the vector of change model a leader focuses on desired change either within the organization or in the external situation in which the organization is embedded, or both. In both cases it is desirable to claim the new high ground as a launching place for additional change. Internal to the organization, it means normalizing the new condition, capability, or state through a variety of means including anchoring the new approaches in culture. With regard to the external situation, the new
values or approaches can be imbedded in organizational relationships, in social institutions, in agreements, in political commitments, or merely in mutual understandings.

References


