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# Developing New Public Governance as a public management reform model

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## ABSTRACT

The concept of New Public Governance (NPG) has proven valuable as an umbrella term for cross-sector collaboration in public governance. Thus far, however, its conceptual development has mainly focused on the external relations of government. To develop NPG as a public management reform model, this article examines its internal dimension by specifying eight NPG reform tools for advancing collaboration within the public sector. We argue that the NPG reform model enables scholars to capture significant collaborative transformations in public administration and suggest new avenues for public management reform research.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, multiple public management reforms have swept the public sector in liberal democracies as governments continuously attempt to make their administrations more effective, efficient, flexible, and robust. In parallel, public management reform research has attempted to develop appropriate theoretical concepts for analysing new reform trends. In recent years, public management reform theory has converged around notions of at least three major reform models aiming to capture the developments in present-day public management reforms: the New Public Management (NPM) (Hood 1991; Hood and Dixon 2015), the Neo-Weberian State (NWS) (Drechsler and Kattel 2008; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017; Randma-Liiv 2012), and the New Public Governance (NPG) (Osborne 2006, 2010; Torfing and Triantafyllou 2013). Today, NPM, NWS, and NPG constitute the three most prevalent reform models in contemporary public management reform research. Each model contains a discrete and relatively coherent set of ideas, values, and assumptions about the ends and means in reform policies, measures, and tools. Briefly put, NPM reforms aim to enhance public sector efficiency and performance by increasing market-based competition and performance management, NWS reforms seek to enhance public

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sector effectiveness by developing and sustaining user-oriented professionalism, while NPG reforms attempt to enhance public value creation by advancing collaborative relations across sectors and levels of society.

In the public management research literature, the NPG concept has gained traction as an umbrella term capturing the increased use of governance networks and partnerships for enhancing public–private and public–non-profit collaboration that tackles complex problems and produces public value (Osborne 2006, 2010). Today, the concept also covers processes of co-creation and co-production with citizens (Torfing et al. 2020). Public administration research and theory has deployed the NPG term to depict general reform developments from rule-based, bureaucratic administration over the influx of ideas and mechanisms emulating competitive markets to the gradual infusion of partnerships, networks and collaborative platforms for public value production.

Considering its usefulness for the purposes of public management reform research, however, leading scholars have criticized NPG for lacking attention to the structural and relational reconfigurations occurring within the public sector. In their seminal work on public management reforms, Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017) reason:

That we should expect more networking and partnerships, and more bodies to ensure consultation and participation – all of that is obvious. But what specific changes should we expect in the machinery of central government? [...] The NPG ‘movement’, thus far, has had more to say about what the *external* relations of government should look like than its *internal* structures’. (105–6; emphasis in original)

The NPM and NWS reform models both embody a range of well-developed notions for analysing the internal restructuring of public administration and management, including structural fragmentation, marketization, recentralization, output-oriented performance management, etc. In its current conceptualization, however, the NPG model lacks similar notions for capturing the internal dimension of recent reform waves pushing for more collaborative forms of governance within the state. Focusing mainly on external relations and neglecting the current reform trends encouraging new forms of collaborative management within the public sector, the NPG concept thus remains rather blunt and of limited use for identifying and understanding the full implications of contemporary public management reforms that deploy and advance collaboration as a central governing mechanism.

At a time when governments increasingly initiate new forms of collaboration within and across sectors to manage complex problems and cross-cutting crises (Ansell et al. 2021; Christensen and Lægried 2007; Horwatha and Morrison 2011; Krogh 2022; Maier and Wirth 2018; Scott and Boyd 2023), there is a need for a theoretical concept capable of capturing how collaborative public management reforms reimagine and reconfigure structures and relations within the public sector. Recent decades have seen extensive research on collaborative relationships within the public sector, but this research has remained scattered across different subfields of public administration and management without proper integration into the NPG concept as a cohesive reform model. Hence, the insights from the various strands of research exist in relative isolation without contributing to the development of a coherent and precise reform model concept that fully captures the new collaborative reform wave in the public sector. To contribute towards the conceptual development of NPG as an analytical public management reform model, we set out to address the following research

question: *What traits and tools characterize New Public Governance as a collaborative public management reform model?*

The article proceeds in four steps. First, we define the concept of public management reform models, conceptualizing their internal and external dimensions, and specify the defining features of the NPG reform model vis-à-vis the NPM and the NWS reform models (section 2). Second, we define four forms of collaboration within the public sector that NPG reforms may seek to advance (section 3). Third, based on a review of the existing collaborative governance, management and leadership literature, we identify eight structural and processual NPG reform tools for advancing internal collaboration and contemplate their theoretical and empirical usage and interrelationships (section 4). Finally, we argue that the developed NPG reform model strengthens our ability to capture, understand and assess collaborative transformations within the public sector and suggest new avenues for public management reform research (section 5).

## 2. Public management reform models and their internal and external dimensions

A public management reform model is a meso-theoretical concept used to conceive and identify patterns in single or multiple public management reforms. More specifically, a reform model denotes a relatively coherent set of ideas, values, and assumptions about the ends and means of organizational change embedded in reform policies, measures, and tools. Reform models should not be mistaken for governance paradigms or doctrines that exist ‘out there’ as more or less hegemonic rationalities that shape the formulation and implementation of reforms. They are analytical constructs that serve the purpose of organizing large quantities of empirical material and grouping otherwise disparate reform practices into meaningful conglomerates of reform components (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017, 19). This enables analysts to understand and discuss inherent logics and tensions in single reforms as well as broader national or international developments of public management reforms in a comparative perspective. Therefore, any given empirical reform or set of reforms in a given timeframe or context need not adhere to a single reform model; on the contrary, they may well involve multiple public reform tools that analysts will interpret as components of different – sometimes even conflicting – reform models (Halligan 2022).

When conceptualizing New Public Governance (NPG) as a public management reform model, we must therefore define a relatively coherent set of assumptions about the ends and means of organizational change, which is clearly delineated from other major reform model concepts. The existing public governance and management literatures pitch *cross-sector collaboration*, *network management*, and *public value co-creation* as defining features of NPG, distinguishing it from the market-based competition, performance management, and output-oriented efficiency of New Public Management (NPM) as well as the user-oriented professionalism, responsive management and enhanced user satisfaction of the Neo-Weberian State (NWS) (Osborne, 2006, 2010; Torfing et al. 2020; Torfing and Triantafillou 2013; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017: 18–23). We thus define the NPG reform model as a relatively coherent set of reform policies, measures, and tools that rely on ideas, values, and assumptions about collaboration as a means for creating public value, for instance through network governance, stakeholder involvement, negotiated decision-making, shared-power

arrangements, devolved and decentralized authority, resource mobilization, and/or the management of inter-organizational interdependencies (Osborne, 2006, Osborne 2010; Torfing and Triantafillou 2013).

At a meta-theoretical level, all public management reform models are comprised of both an external and an internal dimension. Their external dimension concern the restructuring of relationships between public sector, the private sector, and civil society, including relationships between public and private service providers, public and non-profit organizations, as well as public bureaucracies and citizens. Their internal dimension covers the reorganization of relationships within the public sector, including relationships between levels of government, public organization across administrative sectors, as well as managers and employees. The distinction between the external and the internal dimensions of reform models is analytical in nature and does not reflect a strict separation in practice. For instance, governance through networks with external actors may require the formation of internal networks allowing public actors to continuously negotiate their mandate internally.

Though all reform models contain both an external and an internal dimension, the conceptual development of the dimensions of the three major reform models vary substantially. We find extensive conceptualization of the external and internal sides of NPM. The NWS, on the other hand, has a significant internal dimension but a much less developed external dimension. Finally, NPG has a well-developed external dimension but a poorly developed internal dimension. Based on key contributions to the public management reform literature on NPM (Boston et al. 1996; Bottery 1996; Christensen and Læg Reid 2001; Hood 1991), the NWS (Byrkjeflot, Du Gay, and Greve 2017; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017; Randma-Liiv 2012), and NPG (Osborne, 2006, Osborne 2010; Torfing and Triantafillou 2013; Torfing et al. 2020), Table 1 displays an overview of some of the most prominent reform tools along the external and internal dimensions of the three reform models.

While such overviews are useful for clarifying the distinct features and characteristics of the respective public management reform models, unequivocally assigning a particular public reform tool to a single reform model often proves difficult (Hood and Jackson 1991). According to Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017, 27), a given tool may be associated with more than one model; for example, ‘PPPs [public–private partnerships] feature in both the NPM and the NPG paradigms’. While we agree concerning the difficulties of clear association at a general level, we understand reform models as analytical constructs that work to highlight specific aspects and uses of tools. As for PPPs, for instance, reformers may advance them as a means for engaging private contractors in public procurement to enhance the economic efficiency of infrastructure projects or the like, in which case we may meaningfully associate them with the NPM reform model; or they may deploy them as a means for establishing cross-sector collaboration with social enterprises in order to tackle wicked problems in new and innovative ways, whereby they latch on to the NPG reform model (Greve and Graeme 2010; Krogh and Thygesen 2022).

The ability to advance the effectiveness of public administration through public management reforms grows with the variety of tools available and how they are deployed. Thus far, however, the NPG literature has largely failed to specify how, when, and why particular public reform tools promote collaborative structures and relations within the public sector, limiting our understanding of the role that collaboration plays, and can come to play, in public management reforms. At a general

**Table 1.** The external and internal dimensions of three major reform models.

	NPM	NWS	NPG
<b>External dimension</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Privatization</li> <li>• Outsourcing</li> <li>• Contracting out</li> <li>• Quasi-public firms</li> <li>• Public–private partnerships</li> <li>• User surveys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• User boards</li> <li>• User surveys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Network governance</li> <li>• Cross-sector collaboration</li> <li>• Public–private innovation partnerships</li> <li>• Co-creation and co-production with citizens</li> </ul>
<b>Internal dimension</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single-purpose public organizations</li> <li>• Strategic management</li> <li>• Performance management</li> <li>• Performance measuring</li> <li>• Performance contracts</li> <li>• Bonus salary systems</li> <li>• Benchmarking</li> <li>• Output-orientation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Re-)centralization of public services</li> <li>• Modernization of public bureaucracy</li> <li>• Professionalization of public services</li> <li>• Result-oriented management</li> <li>• Evaluation and ex-post control</li> <li>• User-orientation in services</li> </ul>	?

level, we thus agree that the NPG literature is ‘essentially outward-looking’ and largely ‘remains silent about how, internally, the core of the state should be organized’ (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017, 214), fuelling the problem of deploying NPG as a conceptual reform model for the public management reform analysis.

Going back to one of the earliest, and still most authoritative, formulations of the NPG concept, however, we find the following description:

[T]he NPG [...] posits both a plural state, where multiple interdependent actors contribute to the delivery of public services, and a pluralist state, where multiple processes inform the policy-making system. [...] [I]ts focus is very much upon inter-organizational relationships and upon the governance of processes, stressing service effectiveness and outcomes that rely upon the interaction of PSOs [Public Service Organizations] with their environment. The central resource-allocation mechanism is the inter-organizational network. (Osborne 2010, 9)

Such a conceptualization obviously prompts a strong interest in horizontal, inter-organizational collaboration between interdependent public and private actors. Upon closer inspection, however, it does not preclude a preoccupation with the internal administration, organization and inner workings of the state. In conceptualizing the internal dimension of NPG, we direct our attention to multi-actor interdependencies within the plural and pluralist state apparatus and the public sector more broadly speaking.

### 3. Four forms of internal collaboration within the public sector

To develop the internal dimension of NPG, we must develop a clear understanding of the forms of internal relationships that NPG reforms attempt to reconfigure. While the external dimension of NPG concerns horizontal, inter-organizational relations between interdependent public and private actors, the internal dimension of NPG is about the collaborative (rather than the hierarchical or competitive) organization and management of relations between actors within the public sector. These relations

include not only horizontal relations between co-ordinate actors, but also vertical relations between actors on different levels of government. Moreover, they involve not only collaborative relations between collective actors, but also collaborative relations between individuals. Based on the theoretical distinction between horizontal and vertical relationships as well as relationships between collective and individual actors, Table 2 displays four forms of internal collaboration within the public sector along with eight associated NPG reform tools.

The four forms of collaboration have different features and preconditions. Horizontal collaboration between co-ordinate public organizations (i.e. two public entities on the same political-administrative level) hinges on their willingness and capacity to initiate and facilitate collaboration based on their mutually recognized interdependence (Mandell 2007). Hence, it is the form of internal collaboration most akin to the public–private collaboration treated in the existing NPG literature.

Collaboration between superiors and subordinates may appear to present a contradiction in terms, as one organization submits itself to the commands of another organization with higher authority. Yet command-and-control relations do not exhaust the relationship between superior and subordinate organizations, which may at times also involve collaboration (Krogh 2017). In fact, collaboration may even benefit from superior organizations mandating collaboration and stipulating its conditions (Krogh 2022; Provan and Kenis 2007).

Collaboration between co-ordinate members of public organizations is a widespread phenomenon, as most public organizations rely on a horizontal division of labour between individuals or groups with different professional expertise that are necessary to solve the organization's tasks and reach its goals (Bronstein 2003). As tasks and goals grow more complex, public organizations may convert into matrix organizations with composite centres and teams that work together on cross-cutting programmes and initiatives. In these situations, employees must collaborate across their professional expertise, standards and norms to succeed.

Collaboration between public managers and employees within public organizations is inevitably structured by the organizational hierarchy in which public managers are in a position to decide over subordinate employees. However, public managers rarely have the capacity or desire to determine how their subordinates go about their work in detail. In modern public organizations, subordinate public sector employees are often expected to adopt an entrepreneurial ethic and exercise considerable initiative in the

**Table 2.** Forms of internal collaboration and associated reform tools.

	Horizontal collaboration	Vertical collaboration
<b>Collaboration between collective actors</b>	<p><i>Collaboration between co-ordinate public organizations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Publicly mandated networks</li> <li>● Public network management</li> </ul>	<p><i>Collaboration between superior and subordinate public organizations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Decentralization</li> <li>● Political-administrative metagovernance</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration between individual actors</b>	<p><i>Collaboration between co-ordinate members of public organizations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Integrative public leadership</li> <li>● Team management</li> </ul>	<p><i>Collaboration between superiors and subordinates in public organizations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Distributed leadership</li> <li>● Trust-based management</li> </ul>



pursuit of organizational goals, which renders the manager–employee relationship more collaborative than hierarchical (Triantafillou 2012, 71–6).

The following section considers how the eight different reform tools advance these four forms of collaboration through intentional reconfigurations of administrative structures and relationships on different levels of government.

#### **4. NPG reform tools for advancing collaboration within the public sector**

Every reform model is associated with a number of reform tools, defined as governing techniques that help to achieve reform goals (cf. Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017). The tools of public management reforms are not substantive policy tools that affect policy outcomes directly (e.g. regulations, subsidies) but rather procedural tools that alter aspects of a government’s own workings (Bali et al. 2021). They reconfigure public organizations, structures, processes, and relationships as a means for producing institutional and behavioural change that enhances public sector efficiency, effectiveness, and/or value creation. At a general level, we may distinguish between structural tools that (re-)connect actors in new ways, redistributing power, resources, roles, and responsibilities among them, and processual tools that reconfigure their interactions, altering working procedures, norms, and identities. Public reformers may use such tools to transform the internal workings of the public sector while public management reform analysts may identify and study them in reform analyses.

As the previous section laid out, NPG reform tools seek to enhance collaboration, not only across the public sector, the private sector, and civil society (the external dimension of NPG), but also within the public sector itself (the internal dimension of NPG). An NPG reform tool seeks to overcome cognitive, relational, and communication barriers to efficient collaboration between public organizations and their members (cf. Rouzbehani 2020). More specifically, a managerial reform tool belongs to the internal NPG reform toolbox if it advances one or more of the four theoretically possible forms of collaboration within the public sector (cf. Table 2 above).

Drawing on the considerable and growing literatures on collaborative governance, management and leadership in the public sector, the following subsections define the eight NPG reform tools, which include one structural reform tool and one processual reform tool for advancing each of the four forms of internal collaboration. All of the presented reform tools are well-described in the collaborative governance, management and leadership literatures but have not yet been integrated in a cohesive understanding of the internal dimension of the NPG reform model. As previously mentioned, it is inherently difficult to confine a particular tool to a single purpose, which is also the case for internal NPG reform tools that may be deployed for advancing more than a single form of collaboration within the public sector. However, we believe that loosely tying a structural and a processual reform tool to each of the four forms of internal collaboration helps to demonstrate the diversity of tools belonging to the NPG reform toolbox, which meets the current needs for conceptual development. The list of tools is therefore neither exhaustive nor final in any ultimate or essentialist sense but should rather be seen as an open call for further theoretical and empirical work detailing and expanding on the inner workings of the reform model, for instance by adding more tools or by specifying the reform measures, instruments, and devices that support the deployment of particular tools. After

presenting the tools, we discuss their internal relationships and how they connect to the wider conglomerate of collaborative management practices in the public sector.

#### **4.1. Tools for advancing horizontal collaboration between collective public actors**

##### **4.1.1. Publicly mandated networks**

To advance horizontal collaboration between collective public actors, politicians and public executives may mandate public governance networks as a means for deliberately designing institutional frameworks for connecting relevant public actors around a unified purpose of solving a specific public problem (Krogh 2022). Typically, they will issue a legal statute or decree defining key features of the network, including its purpose and tasks, eligible and/or mandatory members, its leadership structure, and the formal procedures and decision-making structures of the network (Bryson, Crosby, and Stone 2015; Ovseiko et al. 2014; Popp and Casebeer 2015; Provan and Kenis 2007; Segato and Raab 2019). As a reform tool, mandating and designing networks is particularly relevant in sectors where public networks have not formed and grown into capable and self-governing conglomerates from below. Research has shown how mandated networks exist in various sectors, including health and education in England (Ovseiko et al. 2014) and Canada (Popp and Casebeer 2015), chronic care in Italy (Segato and Raab 2019), and community safety and crime prevention in Wales (Crawford and Evans 2017), Sweden (Lidskog and Persson 2012), and Denmark (Krogh 2017). While mandating public networks is a tool for forging and strengthening relationships between collective public actors, it does not guarantee that the public actors will invest time and resources in collaborative problem-solving and public value creation. Oftentimes, it requires network management to dismantle the barriers and reinforce the drivers of networked collaboration.

##### **4.1.2. Public network management**

Within the formal network structures, public network managers apply instruments, measures, and devices for initiating, maintaining, and administering networked collaboration between the co-ordinate public organizations that seek to improve their collective capacity to understand and solve a societal problem; for example, through the inter-organizational procurement of shared services (Murray, Rentell, and Geere 2008). A widespread phenomenon in the Nordic welfare states, network management is often found in areas of complex social welfare or public health service delivery (Alam and Griffiths 2016; Hjelm, Hendriksen, and Hansen 2011; Læg Reid and Rykkja 2022) and in natural resource management (Falleth and Hovik 2009). It is also found in the management of larger urban planning and urban housing as a way to overcome ineffective problem-solving that often follows from the presence of numerous local governments (Vitopoulos et al. 2018; Won Lee and Jun Park 2007). Reforms may work to incentivize collaboration between co-ordinate public organizations by setting goals that increase their interdependence. They may also develop their network management competencies and developing HR policies for recruiting personnel with needed network management competencies. Over time, effective network management will support and sustain trust building between network actors, turning trust into the key coordinating mechanism between the involved organizations (Klijn, Edelenbos, and Steijn 2010).

## **4.2. Tools for advancing vertical collaboration between collective public actors**

### **4.2.1. Decentralization**

Decentralization is a structural reform tool that disperses power from central to local government and from superior to subordinate public organizations. Decentralization may range from the deconcentration or dispersal of state services to local areas, over the delegation of responsibility for specific government functions, to the devolution of legislative competences (Lago 2021). In and of themselves, none of these power transfers necessarily enhances collaboration between levels of government (Secco et al. 2017). However, by flattening governmental hierarchies, creating more equal relationships, and dampening command-and-control, decentralization reconfigures the public sector structurally in ways that prepare the ground for increased collaboration between the operationally autonomous but interdependent public actors on multiple levels of government (Haveri et al. 2009; Hertting and Klijn 2019). For example, in several countries, climate change adaptation measures have relied on collaboration between central government and local authorities with considerable resources needed for locally adapted solutions (Juhola and Westerhoff 2011).

### **4.2.2. Political-administrative metagovernance**

To facilitate collaboration between superior/subordinate public organizations, elected politicians and high-ranking public officials with a superior legal mandate may conduct metagovernance through political-administrative framing, collaborative management, or direct participation (Sørensen and Torfing 2007, 2009). Instead of dictating regulation and rules for subordinate public organizations to follow, a superior political-administrative organization may set the policy agenda, delineate a set of feasible options, define the premises for interactive decision-making, and influence the perceived relevance of the negotiated policy outputs. Roe (2020) has argued that the state may spur collaboration across levels of government by providing or retaining public funds, enhancing accountability through reporting duties, and monitoring collaborative activities. Previous studies have shown how political-administrative metagovernance is exercised in the provision of social services (Voets, Verhoest, and Molenveld 2015) and in pushing for sustainable development goals and actions (Meuleman 2018).

## **4.3. Tools for advancing horizontal collaboration between individual public actors**

### **4.3.1. Integrative public leadership**

Integrative public leadership concerns the ability of public leaders to work across professional boundaries in order to mobilize the necessary expertise and resources to create public value (Crosby and Bryson 2010; Morse 2010). It involves assembling the team and clarifying their respective roles and responsibilities, thereby reducing uncertainties, increasing commitment to the process, and lowering the risk of disappointment (Page 2010). Studies indicate that effective integrative leadership is predicated on staff perceptions, employee skills and training, as well as trust in, between, and from public leaders (Smith and Mogro-Wilson 2008). Integrative public leadership may assume many technical forms and work in different policy areas (Bryson et al. 2013). In North Carolina, for instance, integrative leadership was exercised to catalyse interdisciplinary collaboration in relation to three very different policy issues related to

sewage, broadband, and schooling (Morse 2010). Integrative leadership enabled individual public leaders to bridge differences between public professionals to create successful collaboration.

#### **4.3.2. Team management**

Team management of employees with diverse professional backgrounds is widely recognized as a productive way of facilitating collaboration between co-ordinate members of public organizations. A recent review study has shown how team management can assist public employees in bridging gaps (professional, social, physical, and task-related), negotiating overlaps in professional roles and tasks, and creating the spaces necessary for these negotiations (Schot, Tummers, and Noordegraaf 2020). As a reform tool, it may facilitate collaboration by developing common visions, aims, understandings, values, norms, and skill sets that bring diverse employees together in the pursuit of shared goals. A growing body of literature suggests that public sector employees are motivated not only by generalized altruism, but public service motivation; that is, their contribution to the production of generalized public value, which in turn is underpinned by more specific professional norms and values (Bøgh Andersen and Serritzlew 2012). Tapping into the common public service motivation of diverse professionals, public sector reforms may advance collaboration across their differential professional norms and values based on managerial respect for the professional autonomy of employees and an organizational commitment to collaboration as a necessary means for effectively solving organizational tasks and producing public value (Carmeli and Gittell 2009; Gittell, Seidner, and Wimbush 2010; Lukersmith, Taylor, and Salvador-Carulla 2021; Melo, De Waele, and Polzer 2022; Temby et al. 2016). To advance collaboration in public sector organizations, public management reform should therefore promote management practices that increase public service motivation instead of pay-for-performance systems that crowd out motivation and lower organizational effectiveness (Ritz, Brewer, and Neumann 2016).

### **4.4. Tools for advancing vertical collaboration between individual public actors**

#### **4.4.1. Distributed leadership**

Altering the distribution of responsibilities, distributed leadership restructures the relationship between public managers and employees based on the idea of leadership as a collective enterprise between individuals in different positions and, at times, organizational levels (Gronn 2002). Implying that managers and employees share leadership tasks and responsibilities to achieve organizational goals, distributed leadership relies on manager–employee dialogue and joint action in the execution of organizational tasks. It is a form of leadership particularly relevant in public healthcare organizations and other organizations that require extensive collaboration to meet their goals (Jakobsen, Kjeldsen, and Pallesen 2021). By now, there is a rather substantive literature on the conditions under which the exercise of distributed leadership in public organizations will enhance or erode organizational effectiveness (Fitzgerald et al. 2013; Jakobsen, Kjeldsen, and Pallesen 2021). For example, studies of US federal agencies suggest that distributed leadership both feeds off and enhances employee motivation and commitment to shared goals (Campbell 2016).

#### **4.4.2. Trust-based management**

Trust-based management relies on managerial trust in the benevolence and capabilities of public employees to perform tasks and to fulfill organizational goals. It is guided by the assumption that trust between managers and employees both results from and contributes towards enhanced participation, ownership and empowerment of employees in decision making processes, which further supports a collaborative organizational culture and improves organizational effectiveness (Nyhan 2000; Rousseu et al. 1998). It has been argued that decades of NPM reforms have eroded manager–employee trust in public organizations (Bouckaert 2012). Still – or perhaps because of this decline in trust – several recent studies suggest an increasing interest in developing and conducting trust-based management (Raaphorst and Walle 2018). Thus far, there is little agreement on exactly how – by what specific methods – to exercise trust-based management. Yet recent research shows that it involves a trust-and-control mix (Vallentin and Thygesen 2017). Important managerial practices include coaching, alignment of individual and organizational goals, and managerial encouragement of employees to experiment and take risks.

#### **4.5. The conglomerate of collaborative management practices in the public sector**

The eight reform tools form part of a multi-faceted conglomerate of reform measures, instruments, and devices for advancing various forms of collaboration in the public sector. Empirically, the eight tools co-exist and interact with each other, producing intricate and complex structures and processes of public value creation. Some tools may serve as enabling conditions or capacities for other tools, for instance when decentralization facilitate the creation of inter-municipal management boards with active public network management (cf. Falleth and Hovik 2009; Hongslo et al. 2016), or when distributed leadership paves the way for trust-based management between local public leaders and employees (Bentzen and Jagd 2014). Accordingly, while reforms may deploy the reform tools individually, they are likely to be more effective when applied in context-sensitive combinations.

In addition to the reform tools available to elite decision-makers at the national level of government who attempt to make deliberate changes to the structures and processes of public organizations with the objective of getting them to run better (cf. Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017, 2), a number of emerging managerial practices have contributed to the collaborative transformation of the public sector in recent years. These practices include the formation of task-specific cross-sectoral working groups in which central agencies come together to coordinate and collaborate around solving a pressing cross-cutting societal problem (Læg Reid and Rykkja 2022); the initiation of public policy labs and policy innovation labs in which public managers and employees from multiple sectors and levels of government assemble to co-design new policies and integrative forms of public service delivery (Fleischer and Carstens 2022; Krogh 2023; Tönurist, Kattel, and Lember 2017); as well as the creation of collaborative performance summits in which public collaborators gather periodically to exchange performance information, examine progress, and explore performance improvement actions (Douglas and Ansell 2021). Despite their temporary, project-based and ad hoc nature, these practices underpin and latch on to the reform

tools for more permanent restructuring and reorganization of the roles, relationships and resource distributions between public actors.

In addition to the emerging managerial practices, new collaborative ideas, norms, and values develop in public organizations, which also affects the institutional environment that the reform tools work on and work within. Such institutional developments include new norms about letting the problem or task define the range of actors involved in generating innovative solutions (Torfing and Ansell 2021), the shift from a product-dominant logic to a public service logic in public service organizations (Osborne 2018), and an increasing use of developmental evaluation for collaborative programme development, adaptation, and innovation (Patton 1994). The interaction between the NPG reform tools, emerging management practices, and ideational, normative and value-based transformations in the public sector constitutes an important topic for public management reform research in the years to come.

## 5. Grasping the quiet revolution of collaboration in public management reforms

In search of *the next big thing*, public administration and management scholars tend to become fascinated by new fads, focusing on new ruptures and developments that stand in stark contrast to the bureaucratic organizations and procedures of classic public administration. However, fascination quickly turns into delusion. Blinded by the lights of governance networks, public-private partnerships and public value co-creation, the NPG literature has come to overlook the concurrent collaborative transformations occurring inside the machineries of government. For the past couple of decades, the NPG term has served as a valuable umbrella concept for capturing important developments in public governance, but the collective neglect of its internal dimension has curtailed its ability to capture the scope, magnitude and effects of the multifaceted conglomerate of collaborative public management reform tools.

The conceptual development of NPG as a public management reform model offers a theoretical gist for a much needed empirical research programme that sets out to map, understand and assess the collaborative developments in public management reforms. At the most general level, the NPG reform model serves the purpose of grouping otherwise disparate reform practices into meaningful assemblages of reform components informed by ideas, values, and assumptions about multi-actor collaboration, providing a necessary condition for scientific knowledge accumulation through integrative pattern identification in the study of interrelated collaborative reform practices. More specifically, the developed model may contribute to public management reform analysis in at least three ways.

Firstly, reform analysts may deploy the NPG reform model as a framework for understanding the rationalities of government and the techniques and practices of collaborative public management reforms (cf. Walters 2012). In addition to the analysis of ideas informing specific reforms, it may contribute to the longitudinal analysis of ideational trajectories seeking to track ideational change in the conceptions of internal (and external) collaboration that inform public management reforms over time.

Secondly, the NPG reform model may contribute to comparative studies of public management reform waves aiming to map the relative prevalence of different reform models across socio-political contexts. Existing comparative reform studies have

captured different forms and degrees of transformation in public–private relations, but equally systematic research on collaborative transformations within the public sector is warranted. Such studies may identify more or less conducive contextual conditions for advancing collaboration within the public sector. They may identify the politics and public administration contexts in which the internal NPG reform tools are particularly relevant and effective, and detect drivers and barriers to the implementation of collaborative public management reforms within and across institutional environments.

Thirdly, public management reform studies may apply the NPG reform model alongside the NPM and NWS reform models to understand hybrid reform mixes of internal and external reform elements associated with the different models. Used in combination with the other models, it provides a basis for examining internally inconsistent reforms, showing how co-existing and competing demands produce managerial cross-pressures, tensions and dilemmas in public organizations. Adding the NPG reform model to their conceptual tool box, reform analysts may thus expose means–ends detachment and internal friction between reform components, but also attune their analytical lens to capture hybrid forms of public management that bridge otherwise opposing institutional logics and governmental rationalities.

Finally, while mainly theoretical, our conceptual exposition does have some practical implications. At the most general level, it suggests that public management reforms seeking to enhance the production of public value should focus not only on public–private sector collaboration, but also on developing collaboration within the public sector. More specifically, policy makers pursuing public management reform may consider deploying a range of structural and processual reform tools, including publicly mandated networks, public network management, decentralization, political-administrative metagovernance, integrative public leadership, team management, distributed leadership, and trust-based management.

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