

Governance and accountability in reshaping public services: open challenges and wicked problems of the 21st Century

Workshop organised by:

International Centre of Public Accountability (ICOPA),

Durham University, 11th/12th December 2023.

(linked to a Special Issue of *Public Administration*)

Call for Papers

The International Centre of Public Accountability (ICOPA) at Durham University is delighted to announce its second international workshop: “Governance and accountability in reshaping public services: open challenges and wicked problems of the 21st Century”.

In the 21st century, public-service delivery has radically changed. It has been suggested that decision making around the modes of public-service provision should no longer be considered a simple top-down process. This is mainly because of the recognised role and involvement of a multitude of different stakeholders, including local communities and citizens. Similarly, public services are increasingly seen as digitalised, coproduced and co-created by users and their communities. The involvement of different stakeholders and the adoption of different, more complex, delivery modes, raise important public-governance issues that have implications for public services, as well as for governments and end users (Bovaird, 2007; Carstensen et al., 2022; Bovaird et al., 2023). Over the years, public services themselves have undergone a number of changes in their management and accountability practices, with increased transparency and performance focus seen as being vital (Ditillo et al., 2015). While the term “public services” is often used as a synonym for government services, in reality it covers a much broader range of services, frequently with the public, non-profit and for-profit sectors coming together to deliver public benefit.

Historically, the scope of public services has broadened or shrunk as a consequence of political decisions and contextual circumstances. For example, public-service provision expanded in many developed countries after the Second World War; this was followed by a crisis of public confidence in the 1970s/80s, resulting in major changes under the New Public Management and New Public Governance umbrellas (Lapsley, 2009; Osborne et al., 2013; Hyndman and Liguori, 2016; Osborne, 2018). More recently, significant challenges have emerged as public-service providers have grappled with the implementation and impact of digitalisation processes, often under the banner of digital-era governance (Dunleavy et al., 2006). As a consequence of these trends, public services increasingly rely on the private (for-profit and non-profit) sector for their delivery through different approaches, such as public-private partnerships, co-production arrangements, vouchers, and contracting-out (Fernandez, 2007; Stoker, 2011; Petersen et al., 2023). With this perspective, previous literature suggests differences in the way such services are controlled, depending on their governance systems and the nature of the provider. Trust, reputation and available monitoring tools often influence the way in which multi-actor relationships are managed. Public and non-profit providers, in particular, have been found to be under relatively lower, and softer, levels of control when compared to for-profit providers, thanks to more evident goal congruence and shared values (Van Slyke, 2007; Marvel and Marvel, 2008; Lamothe and Lamothe, 2013; Witesman and Fernandez, 2013, AbouAssi et al., 2023). In addition, relationships between the public and the private sectors can often be impeded by the administrative burdens that the former imposes on the latter (Andrews et al., 2022; Petersen et

al., 2023). In many countries, there has been a push towards partnerships in the commissioning and provision of public services (Glendinning, 2002; Entwistle and Martin, 2005; Silvestre et al., 2020). Other models, such as prime contracting, have also been developed (Bovaird, 2016). With respect to such issues, a significant body of research has been carried out in relation to public-sector organisations, while less attention has been paid to the role of the private sector, and especially non-profits (Carmel and Harlock 2008; Rees et al., 2012). Nevertheless, this represents an important governance aspect, as the involvement of non-profit organisations has the potential to create both savings and outcome improvements (Bovaird, 2014).

Relatedly, those working in and delivering public services have also been shown to display distinctive motivations and drives (Perry and Wise, 1996). Research proposes a connection between public-service motivation and such positive outcomes as job satisfaction, individual and organisational performance, organisational and job commitment, and low staff turnover (Ritz et al., 2016). Literature suggests that these can differ quite markedly between types of public-service organisation (Broms et al., 2023).

The workshop welcomes contributions on all aspects connected to the governance and accountability of contemporary public services. Different and innovative methodological approaches are encouraged. Topics suitable for the workshop include, but are not limited to:

- Governance and delivery of public services, contracting out and co-production
- Accountability, accounts and counter accounts in the provision of public services
- Audit, control and transparency of public services
- Digitalisation of public services
- The role of for-profit and non-profit organisations in the delivery of public services
- Investigation of specific public services, such as schools, universities and hospitals
- Management and governance of public services under a historical perspective
- International comparisons of public-service provision

To indicate your interest in presenting at the workshop, abstracts (500 words max) should be kindly sent to Mariannunziata Liguori (mariannunziata.liguori@durham.ac.uk) and Henry Midgley (henry.c.midgley@durham.ac.uk) no later than the **1st October 2023**. The submission deadline for receipt of completed papers for the workshop is **20th November 2023**. Any email submission should include the subject heading: **ICOPA Workshop 2023 submission**.

The Workshop Scientific Committee will review the papers to be accepted for the workshop. The workshop is linked to an open call for a Special Issue of *Public Administration* on “Governance and accountability in reshaping public services: open challenges and wicked problems of the 21st Century”.

After the workshop, the Guest Editors of the Special Issue will provide feedback and invite authors of a sub-set of the workshop papers to submit their contributions for possible consideration in the Special Issue of *Public Administration*. Submissions of papers to the Special Issue outside of the workshop are also welcome; these will go through the normal submission portal and guidelines of the journal.

Workshop attendance fee: £80 per delegate

Register online:

Information will be available from July on the ICOPA's website at:

<https://www.durham.ac.uk/business/research/centres/icopa/>

General registration closes on 24th November 2023.

Workshop Scientific Committee

Professor Laurence Ferry (Durham University), Professor Noel Hyndman (Durham University and Queen's University Belfast), Professor Mariannunziata Liguori (Durham University), Dr. Henry Midgley (Durham University)

Workshop Organising Committee

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Guest Editors of *Public Administration* Special Issue

Dr. Carmen Barbera (Bergamo University), Professor Laurence Ferry (Durham University), Professor Noel Hyndman (Durham University and Queen's University Belfast), Professor Mariannunziata Liguori (Durham University), Dr. Sean McCandless (University of Texas at Dallas), Dr. Henry Midgley (Durham University)

Important dates

Submission deadline for workshop abstracts: 1st October 2023

Decisions on papers for workshop presentation: 16th October 2023

Submission of completed papers to workshop: 20th November 2023

Workshop dates: 11th - 12th December 2023

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