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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is to offer insights into the complex and often unclear context of public sector management, providing a newer theoretical and practical approach to the analysis and interpretation of these issues. The book is grounded in the awareness that the public sector has too often shown inefficiencies, despite the bloody expensive measures that have been undertaken, and from manifold perspectives such as the economic, social, organizational, and institutional ones, among others.

Behind the failures of public sector management, it is possible to recognize classic bureaucratic problems, in spite of actions at multiple levels, and from both theoretical and practical perspectives, to search for solutions.

The current economic environment, characterized by high dynamism, has led private-sector companies to continually search for flexibility and adaptation to react to constant change. However, the increasing flexibility of the private sector has not been matched by an equal flexibility within the public sector. One good example, from recent years, is the strong push to digitization and innovation in regard to information exchange (e.g., electronic communications and documentation between businesses or individuals and public offices). In spite of these directives, public entities are themselves sometimes noncompliant, lacking integrated databases among different public administrations and failing to digitize legacy documents. The result of this imbalance in the public-private relationship is that private citizens and businesses express discomfort and frustration when coming into contact with the public sector.

The examples above are symptomatic of the lack of consideration by public agencies of the complexity that characterizes the social economic environment to date. Literature (e.g., Klijn, 2008; Meek, 2010) has been repeatedly acknowledged these limitations, especially emphasizing that public systems are still strongly anchored to an ancient tradition of bureaucratic, standardized, and repeated activities characterized by high rationality (Meek, 2010). Indeed, as well known from Simon's studies (1956), it is impossible to consider the existence of a perfect rationality, which means that rational behavior, even in the public sector, should be considered more as an exception than the rule (Klijn, 2008).

Understanding and explaining change and complex dynamics within specific contexts – including the public sector – represents a key concern in

much of the literature on governance, and consequently exploring and assessing possible points of contact between studies of public administration and theories of complexity becomes paramount.

Several authors have addressed the theme of complexity in the public context. For instance, Klijn (2008) discussed complexity theories by considering that complexity in the public system is mainly linked to the transition from “government” to “governance,” and to the increasingly central role played by networks in the public sector. Klijn (2008) also emphasized the importance of complexity theory in the understanding of change within systems and the dynamics that result from complex interactions among the actors involved.

Complexity theory has grown in importance over the last decade, and its development has enabled a universal method of practice that proposes a pragmatic and humanistic management practice. The application of complexity theory highlights the importance of the development of an organization’s culture and communication, enabling it to be dynamic while maintaining coherence and stability. Such a culture places the workers, their values, and their mission at the heart of the organization’s practices, recognizing that information technology may provide a framework for complex communication and knowledge use but cannot replace highly developed professional negotiations and cooperation.

Over the last twenty years, some steps in this direction have been made with the models of New Public Management (Hood, 1991) and New Public Governance (Kooiman and Jentoft, 2009; Osborne 2010a, 2010b), which have reflected going towards a “corporatization” of public administrations that should have met the above-mentioned criteria of efficiency and effectiveness.

Yet, this process does not seem to be completed, and in the majority of cases has been hardly slower than expected. In brief, some negative aspects that emerged in the literature during the 1950s and 1960s, referring to old-fashioned bureaucracy, are for certain still valid today, e.g., the “displacement of goals” (Merton, 1940) and the “work to rule” (Blau, 1955). The complexity of the public service world, in fact, limits the usefulness of classical and rational scientific management approaches like New Public Managerialism (NPM); its rigid application of performance management and strategic management is dysfunctional in the public context. The excessive focus on the optimization of results has led to an infrequent (or totally absent) consideration of the social, institutional, and economic factors (determining the context) that instead should be considered in imagining a better functioning and accountable public administration.

Indeed, too many issues remain unsolved. The reference is, above all, to

performance measurement themes, historically affected by long-settled problems. Among these are questions relating to the “work to rule” (Blau, 1955) and the “displacement of goals” (Merton, 1940), not to mention the obsessive focus on rules and procedures, leading to proceduralization rather than fostering substantive change. Given the persistence of old bureaucratic logic that still permeates modern public administration, the path toward broad improvement in the quality of public services for stakeholders is still beyond reach.

Considering the social and public functions they are in charge of, public agencies must ensure that their work is oriented to search for the best administrative efficiency and effectiveness, and that this, in turn, is aimed at satisfying the public stakeholders. Furthermore, the previously highlighted (and still unsolved) issues indicate that effective change in the public sector is required. The theme of change in public administration is, in fact, one of the most recently debated topics, especially with reference to the need to abandon the excessive focus on rules/procedures, and rather move toward models that consider individuals and their behaviors as the core of the organization and of its dynamics. This approach now goes under the name of the “behavioral approach” (Hinna et al., 2016).

Therefore, in this study, issues related to complexity and contingencies are applied to the field of public administration, also taking into account the main theories in the organizational and management fields for analyzing the role of the context and forces that shape organizational boundaries and organizations’ way of acting and behaving.

The book balances a theoretical and methodological approach with an empirical case, by providing two theoretical chapters followed by an empirical analysis of the Italian public sector.

On the basis of all the above, this book aims to answer the following research questions.

✓ *Which organizational features characterize modern public administration?*

✓ *What factors influence the predominance of different models? What aspects characterize the activities carried out by public servants?*

To do so, the book is divided into three chapters, of which the first and the second allow us to map the territory depicting the issues relating to the public sector management in theory and practice, while the third one offers an empirical assessment of the above-cited themes.

Chapter 1 analyzes the characteristics of classic bureaucracies to highlight their typical characteristics, implications, and limits, along with a specific focus on the historic lack of attention paid to the issues of com-

plexity that are intrinsic to the public sector but often neglected. Then, relying upon a systematic literature review, the chapter aims to understand how studies in the wake of NPM have addressed and problematized post-bureaucratic models of public organizations. In doing so, it provides a state-of-art analysis of bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic models.

The review also aims to detect what the literature suggests in terms of possible viable solutions to the critical aspects of the old bureaucracy. The literature offers interesting insights concerning still-neglected issues that need to be deepened. First, there is a lack of attention toward individuals and their behaviors within public organizations. Additionally, greater attention has been paid to Anglo-Saxon countries, while Continental European countries – especially those in the Southern area – are still under-investigated despite their peculiarities.

Chapter 2 problematizes public-sector management through the perspective of the behavioral approach, regarding individuals and their behaviors as key to analyzing and interpreting the whole picture. First, the chapter addresses the debate on the behavioral approach and its importance, building on studies grounded in the for-profit sector, with a specific focus on the framework proposed by Huse (2007). Then the chapter deepens these issues by showing the main implications for the public sector. Literature review using the ISI Web of Knowledge research engine will deepen the issue of individual behaviors within the public sector. Findings will help to support and adapt the framework advanced by Huse (2007), identifying a specific framework to analyze and understand individual behaviors within public administrations. The last section of the chapter provides a discussion on how to locate the behavioral approach within the studies on the public sector, taking as a starting point a study by Geddes (2012) that provided an interesting review of the previous organizational models of public administration: Public Administration, New Public Management (NPM), and Collaborative Public Management (CPM). The discussion will be built on eleven management dimensions: Performance, Accountability, Community engagement, Values, Leadership, Employment relations, Management tasks, Decision-making, Structure, Processes, and Change.

The issues emerging from the first two chapters form the conceptual bases for the empirical analysis in Chapter 3. It aims to examine which organizational features characterize modern public administrations, what factors influence the predominance of different models, and what aspects characterize the activities carried out by public servants, because the literature has often highlighted contrasting results from the implementation of NPM reforms.

Thus, the chapter relies upon an analysis carried out in the Italian context, on the ground of its peculiar political, cultural, and contextual aspects. The analysis relies upon a mixed-method approach to better catch the nuances emerging from face-to-face interviews with participants after their completion of a questionnaire. The questionnaire, administered to 156 public employees, officers, and managers, allowed us to gather data on the degree of specialization of tasks (both horizontal and vertical), the degree of formalization of the tasks, motivation, managerial styles, organizational climate, and areas involving conflict. In addition, face-to-face interviews made it possible to better understand participants' proposals for solving the main issues regarding the public sector. Data from the questionnaires have been analyzed with Pearson's correlation test and linear regression analysis.

The descriptive statistics provide information that enables the discussion on which features characterize the activities that Italian public servants carry out, in terms of degrees of specialization, formalization, and motivation, as well as information on managerial styles and the organizational climate within participants' public agencies.

The correlation test aims to understand which relationships might exist between age, horizontal specialization degree, vertical specialization degree, formalization degree, personal motivation, conflict degree, job qualification, public administration of affiliation, public administration's priority, managerial styles, and solutions to improve motivation. Additionally, the test enhances the discussion on which features characterize the organizational models of the modern public administrations in Italy.

The linear regression was performed to test the dependence of personal motivation on the degrees of specialization, complexity, formalization, and conflict, and the managerial style. The results advance the understanding of which features influence public servants' motivation in carrying out their activities, because the literature highlights that low motivation is associated with high degrees of standardization and formalization.

The concluding chapter provides final remarks based on the analysis. Findings reveal that several issues regarding the public sector remain unsolved, despite several attempts made both theoretically and practically in searching for solutions to problems related to the old bureaucratic approach. The behavioral approach, by focusing on individuals and their behaviors, might provide responses to the highlighted problems. This approach, by putting individuals at the center of the analysis, advances the debate on public-sector issues. Finally, the statistical analysis carried out in Chapter 3 provides insights about the Italian setting, highlighting that the Italian public sector is still characterized by features of the old bu-

reaucratic model and that, rather than being accompanied by post-bureaucratic revolutions, it is accompanied by tendencies toward anarchic models.

This book contributes to the debate on public administration, first, by providing a complete, updated, and in-depth analysis of the main bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic issues by reviewing and discussing previous literature on the theme.

Second, it contributes to the claim that effective change in the public sector should consider focusing on individuals and their behaviors, by employing a different approach to study and manage public organizations. Individuals represent the core of organizations, and the way they behave and interact may shape and define the way in which the organization itself behaves and carries out its activities. This issue is of key importance especially in public administration, where the involved interests affect a broad range of stakeholders.

Third, the findings emerging from the questionnaire support the understanding of the changes taking place in a country, such as Italy, that is part of the less regarded area, the Southern Europe, within studies on the public sector. In fact, findings emerging from the systematic review highlight the conclusion that past research has focused on Anglo-Saxon countries, while European countries, especially those in the Southern Europe area, are less regarded.

Fourth, because the questionnaire addresses crucial themes regarding the public sector, such as specialization, formalization, motivation, conflict, and managerial styles, it could be argued that this book has key implications for both academics and practitioners. Also, it might represent a first step of a more in-depth analysis of the perceptions held by individuals working in the public sector about their environment. This assessment, in turn, becomes crucial to individuate solutions to change those managerial practices and behaviors that are still rooted in the old approach to bureaucracy, which may be unhealthy both for public administrators and their stakeholders. In this way, the book provides concepts and empirical findings with implications useful for academics, public managers, and policy makers.

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Chapter 1

POST-BUREAUCRATIC MODELS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

SUMMARY: 1. Premise. – 2. The phenomenon of complexity. – 3. The phenomenon of bureaucracy. – 4. First responses to bureaucracy in literature. – 5. Research method. – 6. Results. – 6.1. The classic bureaucracy. – 6.2. The professional bureaucracy. – 6.3. The reflexive bureaucracy. – 6.4. The New Public Management. – 6.5. The New Public Governance and the collaborative/representative approach. – 6.6. Hybrid models. – 6.7. The behavioral approach. – 6.8. A chronological allocation of contributions. – 7. Discussion. – 8. References.

1. Premise

This chapter proposes a systematic literature review to answer two fundamental, albeit inconclusively debated, questions.

Firstly, it aims to detect the limitations and concerns affecting public sector bureaucracies. Secondly, it seeks to describe the models possibly overcoming extant limitations and improving public sector organizations and administrations.

In finding answers to these questions, a fundamental premise is related to the issues of bureaucracy and complexity within the public sector, paying particular attention to those factors, both external and internal, which contribute to qualify public sector organizations as complex bureaucracies.

The second section discusses the features of complexity, also with reference to theories of complexity in public administration. The third section is then focused on discussing the characteristics of bureaucracy, its application within the public sector, and its main limitations. On these grounds – bearing in mind that the public sector is permeated by logics of power, politics, and complexity, and considering the importance of culture and context – the fourth section will discuss the first responses to bureaucracy that emerged in literature. The chapter will then explore more in detail how in recent years international literature has discussed new possible organizational models to solve the problems related to bureaucracy. In particular, it would be worth understanding how many studies have addressed the questions raised, especially taking into account the logics of power and politics, the importance of culture and context, and the role of complexity.

2. The phenomenon of complexity

Complexity is a central issue to be considered when addressing the problem of organizing public systems in an appropriate manner. In particular, complexity and the constraints that result from it must be interpreted appropriately in terms of actors and contingencies that might influence a certain process, thus avoiding the otherwise undeniable production of adverse effects on outcomes.

At first glance, complexity could be defined as the characteristic of a system conceived as an organic and structured aggregate of mutually interacting parts, according to which the overall behavior of the system is not immediately attributable to that of individual constituents, depending on the way in which they interact. Complex systems are thus systems “*comprised of numerous interacting identities (parts), each of which is behaving in its local context according to some rule(s), law(s) or force(s)*” (Maguire and McKelvey, 1999: 26). When the individual parts of complex systems (the agents) respond to their own local conditions, they cause the system as a whole to display emergent patterns, even if there is no deliberate coordination or communication between the parts (Maguire and McKelvey, 1999). In other words – and as many theories of complexity stress – systems are self-organizing and display emergent properties which cannot be traced to the behavior of the individual agents alone. These emergent properties and the relatively autonomous character of the agents cause systems to have unpredictable and complex dynamics. Thus, on one side, complexity should be declined in coherence with the specific context in which it has to be applied. On the other side, the concept of complexity facilitates discussion of the fact that it comprehends and explains well the need of a systemic vision that characterizes every economic system, including the public one.

More specifically, complex systems like public sector organizations are largely defined by interaction and communication. This includes interactions between the people within the organization, and the interactive communications flowing in and out of the system through its relationship with other organizations and through those people who enter and then leave the system (Haynes, 2015).

Therefore, since public systems are characterized by dynamic interactions among different actors, it is prominent advancing a discussion on the factors that characterize the concept of social complexity (Luhmann, 1995; McFarland, 1969). Social complexity may derive from varying degrees of interdependencies that exist among the different actors involved within a social system.

According to Luhmann (1995), the best sense we have of social structures derives from understanding the communications, or lack of commu-

nications, between systems and subsystems. Essentially, it is the closure of interaction, the failure of communication, explicitly or implicitly, intended or unintended, that is the defining feature of social and organizational life. Therefore, the marketplace (economics) and the justice system (law) can only be structurally coupled by certain formal methods and points of communication. Subsystems like the justice system work to reduce social complexity to make their own sphere of social operation manageable. One of the consequences is a closure with other subsystems.

Public managers operate in subsystems that are directed by rules, regulations, and procedures, but the interpretation of these is a vital component and different staff will interpret and prioritize them differently depending on their own role, or professional allegiance, in the organization. Managers experience the paradox of openness and closure that Luhmann defines, whereby horizontal and innovative work requires particular skills of communication if progress is to be made.

Complex systems are full of dynamic interactions from which the future state of the system emerges. Managers can take part in these interactions and thereby seek to influence the future of the system, but there are limits in their ability to determine outcomes and to control the direction that the emergence of new forms of order takes. The importance of recognizing changing interactions rather than assuming causations can be applied to an understanding of many historical debates about political problem definition and the role of policy development and public service interventions.

Complexity theory and its study of system dynamics puts much emphasis on feedback interactions (Meadows, 2009). Feedback is reinforcing (positive) or balancing (negative). Social scientists increasingly avoid the “positive” and “negative” labels, because they can be confused with normative value judgments, when the descriptions are intended as simple scientific language for observing system dynamics. Reinforcing and balancing feedbacks are important concepts for managers seeking to intervene in complex systems. They are responses to dynamic and unpredictable patterns and associations of human interactions. Poor judgments about when to respond to complex system dynamics can cause instability and social problems. In fact, the level of stability/variability of a system is an additional possible source of positive or negative influence on the degree of complexity of the system itself.

Finally, complexity may also result from the subjective perceptions of individuals embedded within the system. Thus, factors of social complexity can be related to certain structural or functional characteristics, both to the cognitive limits that the system actors perceive and to a combination of these elements.

By putting an accent on the sociological view of complexity, it is useful to highlight that public organizations are complex by their nature, since they are

embedded in a complex system and they produce complexity, exist in complexity, and feed on complexity (Baccarani, 2010). The public organization, as a social and vital system, relies on internal and external relationships and on the search for survival in long-term horizons through the interactions between the structural and functional elements that make them up, the individuals and the social and environmental systems in which they are embedded.

It is widely acknowledged that the turbulence and uncertainty that characterize modern contexts, along with the increased competitiveness and the unpredictability of markets, are progressively leading to a need for new models within the public sector tending toward ever more open and dynamic systems, characterized by de-structured and less hierarchical organizational forms, based on high diversity and variability, with open, re-ticulated, and flexible boundaries.

Thus, the new model of public organization should take into account that its success and survival are now necessarily based on the acknowledgment and acclamation of the elements of diversity among individuals, on a constant, cooperative, and co-competitive exchange, on communication, on the development of long-term relationships with stakeholders, and on a great permeability and responsiveness to change and innovation (Kale and Singh, 2007; Nonaka, 1994; Powell et al., 2005).

3. The phenomenon of bureaucracy

In its pure form, bureaucracy has been described by Weber (1922) as the most efficient and rational way of organizing. According to the author, bureaucratization is the key part of the rational-legal authority; furthermore, he saw it as the key process in the ongoing rationalization of the Western society. He argued, in fact, that bureaucratic coordination of activities was the distinctive mark of the modern era.

In his study, Weber individuated several preconditions for the emergence of bureaucracy: the growth in space and population being administered; the growth in complexity of the administrative tasks being carried out; and the existence of a monetary economy requiring a more efficient administrative system. Offices are thus ranked in a hierarchical order and their operations are characterized by impersonal rules, while appointments are made according to specialized qualifications.

There was the belief that a system of transparent rules was better than a system without rules. Weber's typical ideal bureaucracy is characterized by hierarchical organization; delineated lines of authority in a fixed area of activity; action taken on the basis of, and recorded in, written rules; bureaucratic officials needing expert training; rules implemented by neutral offi-

cials; career advancement made through public competitions; and is based on technical qualifications.

Weber clarifies that both the public and private bureaucracy are based on specific competencies of various offices. These competencies are specified in various rules, laws, and administrative regulations. This means that:

- There is a rigid division of labor.
- A chain of command is established in which the capacity to coerce is specified and restricted by regulations.
- There is a regular and continuous execution of the assigned tasks by people qualified by education and training to perform them.

This bureaucratic coordination of the actions of large numbers of people became the dominant structural feature of then modern forms of organization. This organizational model allows large-scale planning, and becomes particularly fitting for mass production, where there is a need to perform numerous repeated and standardized activities. The same is true for those particularly rigid contexts, where workers are not asked for particular competences and training, thus allowing managers and executives easily to centralize control and exert their power.

According to Weber, the bureaucratic organization is the privileged mean that has shaped the modern polity, the modern economy, and the modern technology. Bureaucratic types of organization are seen by Weber as technically superior to all other forms of administration, much as machine production is superior to handicraft methods. Moreover, as time passed and the external context changed, several problems and limitations of this model emerged.

Nowadays the term “bureaucracy” has become synonymous with “inefficiency”, following failure in several of its premises. During the 1940s and 1950s, literature already started to advance some negative aspects emerging from the application of bureaucratic models.

Weber himself provided some dysfunctions of bureaucracy. While recognizing bureaucracy as the most efficient form of organization – and even indispensable for the modern state – Weber saw it as a threat to individual freedoms, and the ongoing bureaucratization as leading to a “*polar night of icy darkness*” (Weber, 1946, 128) in which increasing rationalization of human life traps individuals in a soulless “iron cage” of bureaucratic, rule-based, rational control. Its major advantage, the calculability of results, also renders it a model unable to deal with individual cases, leading to phenomena of depersonalization. Thus, modern rationalized and bureaucratized systems of law have become incapable of dealing with individual particularities to which earlier types of justice were well suited.

Merton (1940) introduced the concept of “displacement of goals”, whereby “*an instrumental value becomes a terminal value*” (p. 563). According to the author, by following bureaucracy’s principles and rules, bureaucrats arrived at a situation in which the rules became the goals instead of the process or service to be delivered. While Merton agreed with certain aspects of Weber’s analysis, he also considered the dysfunctional aspects of bureaucracy, which he attributed to a “trained incapacity” resulting from “overconformity”. He saw bureaucrats as more likely to defend their own entrenched interests than to act to benefit the organization as a whole. He further believed that bureaucrats took pride in their craft, which led them to resist changes in established routines. Merton also noted that bureaucrats emphasized formality over interpersonal relationships, and had been trained to ignore the special circumstances of particular cases, causing them to come across as “arrogant” and “haughty”.

Similarly, Selznick (1948) suggests that bureaucrats’ excessive focus on personal goals rather than on those of the organization leads to a bifurcation of interests that hinders the efficient way of doing things.

Blau (1955) emerged as another interesting critic of bureaucracy in relation to the concept of “work to rule”, a trade union tactic according to which employees adopt behaviors to do nothing more than the minimum required by the rules of their contract: they precisely follow all regulations, which may cause a slowdown or decrease in productivity. This behavior can be better translated into “hiding behind the rules”, meaning that the rule becomes a way of justifying something that has not been done by employees.

In brief, critiques of the bureaucratic model can be considered under four aspects, covering both internal and external aspects:

- Economic: inefficiency and low performances.
- Organizational: low motivation of employees; turnover; alienation; lack of human resources policies; lack of flexibility.
- Social: episodes of corruption; absenteeism; opportunism.
- Institutional: low attention paid to citizens; citizens are much more passive (users) than active (customers); poor quality of public services delivered.

These critiques become more relevant if contextualized in a much more modern world, demanding more flexibility. The higher complexity characterizing the modern world requires organizational models and lean procedures able to adapt to a new and ever-changing context.

Even in literature (e.g., Klijn, 2008; Meek, 2010), this limit has been repeatedly acknowledged, especially emphasizing that public systems are still strongly anchored to an ancient tradition of bureaucratic, standardized, and repeated activities characterized by high rationality (Meek, 2010).

Indeed, as well known from Simon’s studies (1956), it is impossible to consider the existence of a perfect rationality, which means that rational be-

haviors, even in the public sector, should be considered more as an exception rather than be taken for granted (Klijn, 2008). This is more even true in a particularly complex context such as the public.

4. First responses to bureaucracy in literature

In literature, considering elements related to control and flexibility or adaptability, two main approaches to the problem of performance management in public bureaucracies are evidenced (Kettl, 1997). The following table shows the key points of the two approaches.

Table 1.1. The two main approaches to solve performance issues within bureaucracies.

Approaches	Optimizing Bureaucracy	Reflexive Bureaucracy
Emphasis	Static efficiency, focus on minimizing costs and increasing productivity.	Continuous learning and reviewing; focus on quality, impact and sustainability of actions to solve problems.
Characteristics of the goals and objectives	Predetermined; singular; focus on specific goals (prioritizing), generating reductionism and myopia.	Temporary and under constant review; attention to interrelationships between multiple objectives (the complex nature of the problems).
Relationship between performance evaluation and execution of tasks	External evaluation, formal objective.	Embedded evaluation, contextual substantive.
Relationship between “front line” and administrative centers	Individual (solitary) and evaluative, based on specific criteria and indicators; two possible outcomes: compliance or deviation.	Deliberative (group), involving justification processes (explaining behaviors and results produced from the actual experience of implementation).
Relationship with uncertainties/dealing with “the unexpected”	Tendency to treat the new and unexpected as if they were variations of pre-established routines (categorical framework) or exceptions.	Unexpected occurrences are constantly problematized for detecting problems and correcting errors; diffusion of innovations.

Source: own re-elaboration from Pires, 2010.

The first approach is guided by the “principle of optimization” and is based on the assumption of the separation between the moments and instances of decision-making, implementation, and evaluation of actions taken by bureaucrats (i.e., separation of means and ends). In this approach, activities and people are evaluated by adopting objective criteria that are far from being related to the substantive contexts of task execution (e.g., decisions, behaviors, and practices in each situation or specific case). For instance, the task of performance management will require the establishment of mechanisms and evaluation systems that are independent and external from the specific task execution. These systems generally consist of formal procedures, such as indicators and quantitative targets, which serve as external – and supposedly objective – parameters to judge the success or failure of the actions executed. The main objective of these systems is to promote greater efficiency by minimizing costs and increasing productivity in the implementation of a restricted set of objectives and results. On the other hand, linking evaluation to objective parameters enables a process of discharge of responsibility, since public managers may hide their decisions behind formal rules and procedures determined *a priori*.

Under this first approach falls the New Public Management (NPM) (Hood, 1991). The NPM emerged after a decade of public spending reductions as an idea of managerializing public services, using new structures, and adopting mixed (network and market) governances. In the context of state failure, of poor performance of its bureaucracies, and of the widespread discontent with the actions of governments, the NPM approach brought to the center of the debate the concern over performance in the public sector. With its focus on results and on optimizing the public budget, the managerial approach promised improvements in bureaucratic efficiency and accountability following agency theory, through the creation of incentive systems that would direct bureaucrats (the agents) to meet the targets set by policy makers, political representatives, and citizens (principals) in the provision of public goods and services. Trying to overcome the mistakes of the past, such as the emphasis on procedural controls, the managerialist proposal introduces into the public context the concepts that have always driven the private sector: the imposition of goals and indicators to measure the performance of organizations and their workers, a strong emphasis on incentives based on payments, and performance-related pay systems. Under this model, public sector organizations should focus on a set of performance goals that can be defined in a specific form, being quantifiable and measurable. Each bureaucrat in the organization should achieve part of the overall goal. Supervisors constantly monitor the performance of their bureaucrats in terms of achieving those goals, taking as ref-

erences indicators of quantitative results. In order to correctly manage incentives, managers distribute bonuses to those employees who periodically meet the established goals.

Despite the appealing premises and promises, assessments of the implementation of managerial reforms around the world have led to paradoxical results. On the one hand, there is evidence of increased productivity; on the other hand, increases in productivity in relation to some specific indicators have also been accompanied by the perception of problems related to the maintenance of satisfactory levels of motivation and commitment by government employees. For example, some studies (Chalkley et al., 2010; Houston, 2000) have demonstrated that performance-based systems involving pecuniary incentives may contribute to increasing productivity, but, in general, they lead to significant losses of intrinsic motivation from professionals – that is, the motivation derived from values, commitment, and a sense of mission in relation to work, as opposed to extrinsic motivation based on rewards not substantially related to work, like money.

In addition, another line of problems identified with managerialist reforms refers to the distortions provoked by the incentive systems implemented. A considerable volume of scholarly work has pointed out the dysfunctional effects of quantitative and predefined performance measurements (Bouckaert and Balk, 1991; Dunleavy and Hood, 1994). Firstly, the specification of quantifiable performance goals necessarily results in an excessive reductionism of what is expected to be the state's (and its bureaucracies') role. Goal-setting tends to limit and focus the actions taken by organizations around very specific and narrow points, reducing employees' abilities to understand and address problems in a broader fashion.

Besides the question of reductionism provoked by the predetermination and pre-specification of results, the measurement and quantitative standardization of these results frequently lead bureaucrats to find ways to convert the activities that they are used to doing into the very products and goals pursued by their supervisors. An indicative example of this is the "creative accounting" that takes place in the recording of activities performed by employees. Supposedly undesirable results can be easily codified in terms of desired outcomes – for example, in order to reduce waiting lists, employees can create a waiting list for the waiting list. These situations show that management systems of this type are not immune to manipulation of the measurement process and to the manipulation of organizational products, in both cases promoting dysfunctional behaviors from the viewpoint of the effectiveness of the actions taken by public bureaucracies.

In other words, a wide and diverse body of evidence has pointed out the side-effects of performance evaluation systems based on the managerialist approach.

Based on these negative evidences, even analysts and academics who sympathize with the model have recognized that reforms inspired by the managerialist approach have failed to deliver the expectations of a more effective and efficient public administration (Dunleavy et al., 2006; Hood and Peters, 2004).

A second approach considers the “principle of reflexivity”. According to the concept of reflexive bureaucracy (Mintzberg, 1979), a public administration should successfully complete the processes entrusted to it, while developing skills and behaviors that can make it reflect on the organization’s functioning. This approach differs from the previous one by rejecting the distinction between decisions, implementation, and evaluation, and emphasizing the need for performance to be assessed in a contextualized manner, as an activity embedded in the actual context of implementation of activities (substantive judgment).

Moreover, the reflective approach also rejects the simplifying assumptions of human behavior in which incentive systems for performance are based on the perception that individuals (or groups and organizations) are motivated by the desire to obtain rewards (such as money or status) and avoid sanctions. Thus, in this second approach, the task of managing performance involves the establishment of routines that enable agents to reflect and review ongoing activities and bureaucratic actions, so that monitoring performance is itself part of a wider process of institutional innovation and learning.

Significant research after the middle of the 2000s argued that a post-NPM epoch might be dawning. Lapsley (2008, 2009) set out a series of unresolved contradictions in the NPM approach, arguing that the NPM failed to deliver better value, since proponents underestimate the complexity permeating the public sector. An alternative perspective that has emerged is that new forms of governance were superseding managerialism (Kooiman and Jentoft, 2009). Osborne (2010a, 2010b), in fact, put new public governances (NPG) at the center of a post-NPM debate, based on involving more actors (both public and private), creating more consensus and voluntary participation in decision-making processes, and establishing collaborative relationships and networks.

However, it should be acknowledged that the results of this approach were weaker than those of the previous one, since trends such as ‘new public management’ (Hood, 1991), ‘performance oriented management’ (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2000) and the rise of the ‘audit society’ (Power, 1999) indicate that the world of public management has now become, first and foremost, a world of measurement (Noordegraaf and Abma, 2003).

The concept of measurement opens up two main issues. On one side, under a prospective point of view, measurement enables the establishment