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New Public Management Is Dead—Long Live Digital-Era Governance FREE

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Abstract

The "new public management" (NPM) wave in public sector organizational change was founded on themes of disaggregation, competition, and incentivization. Although its effects are still working through in countries new to NPM, this wave has now largely stalled or been reversed in some key "leading-edge" countries. This ebbing chiefly reflects the cumulation of adverse indirect effects on citizens' capacities for solving social problems because NPM has radically increased institutional and policy complexity. The character of the post-NPM regime is currently being formed. We set out the case that a range of connected and information technology–centered changes will be critical for the current and next wave of change, and we focus on themes of reintegration, needs-based holism, and digitization changes. The overall movement incorporating these new shifts is toward "digital-era governance" (DEG), which involves reintegrating functions into the governmental sphere, adopting holistic and needs-oriented structures, and progressing digitalization of administrative processes. DEG offers a perhaps unique opportunity to create self-sustaining change, in a broad range of closely connected technological, organizational, cultural, and social effects. But there are alternative scenarios as to how far DEG will be recognized as a coherent phenomenon and implemented successfully.

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