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PUBLIC MANAGEMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

From downsizing to governance Willy McCourt (check xong)
Abstract

Ten public years ago management in developing countries was reaching the end of a period in which 'Washington consensus' model of a small state was dominant, with downsizing and privatization as its key mechanisms. With reform programmes in disarray and NPM an inadequate replacement, the subsequent decade has been one of 'reculer sauter', pour mieux with manage-ment dislodged from centre stage by a concern with domestic and the political determinants of reform.

We have also seen the return of a poverty agenda, featuring education and health in central roles, to which management specialists have yet to respond fully. This review suggests the need for public management specialists to absorb a political analysis before returning to perennial management concerns.

THE 'WASHINGTON CONSENSUS' IN PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

QUẢN LÝ CÔNG Ở CÁC NƯỚC ĐANG PHÁT TRIỀN Từ giảm biên chế đến quản trị Willy McCourt Tóm tắt

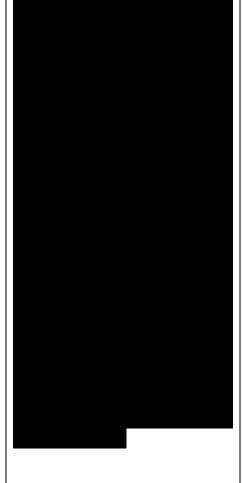
Mười năm trước, quản lý công ở các nước đang phát triển bước vào cuối giai đoạn trong đó mô hình nhà nước nhỏ theo "Đồng thuân Washington" chiếm ưu thế, với các cơ chế chủ đao là giảm biên chế và tư nhân hóa. Với các chương trình cải cách còn nhiều xáo trôn và những thay thế không thích hợp, thập kỷ sau đó được coi là một trong những "bước lùi để tiến", ở đó quản lý không còn chiếm vị trí trung tâm vì những quan ngại về các yếu tố quyết định mang tính chính trị và nội bộ của quá trình cải cách (quản lý bị đánh bật ra khỏi vị thế trung tâm bởi những yếu tố về nôi bô và chính tri mang tính quyết định của quá trình cải cách). Chúng ta cũng nhìn thấy sư trở lai của các chương trình nghi sư về xoá đói giảm nghèo, nổi bật trong đó là các vấn đề về giáo duc và sức khỏe đóng vai trò trung tâm nhưng chưa từng được các chuyên gia quản lý quan tâm đầy đủ. Bài báo tổng quan này cho thấy các chuyên gia quản lý công cần hiểu được phân tích chính trị trước khi nghiên cứu các vấn đề quản trị bền vững.

PMR opened for business at the tail end of the 'Washington consensus' (Williamson 1993), the period of roughly twenty years following the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 and Ronald Reagan in 1980 when International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, the decisive development actors of the time, came to believe that development's overriding goal should economic growth, from which all other good things would follow. Since state-owned enterprises were perceived to have underperformed in the first decades of post-colonial independence, growth was to be the job of the private sector.

That is largely why President Reagan declared on the day he took office in 1981 that 'government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem'. At their headquarters just across Washington, the IMF and the World Bank — then as now, the US President effectively appointed the Bank's President soon picked up his conviction (see Chaudhry 1994: 199).

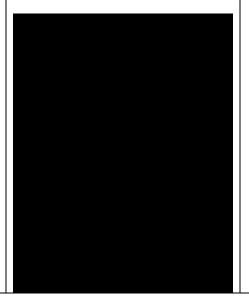
While the logical consequence of privatization was surprisingly slow to materialize (Cook and Minogue 1990), the other logical consequence of

downsizing in the public workforce quickly followed. Between 1987 and 1996 the World Bank supported downsizing programmes in no fewer than sixty-eight developing and transitional countries in the context of its ubiquitous 'structural adjustment' loans (Nunberg 1997). In individual countries the scale could be dramatic, nowhere more so than in China, which embarked in 1998 on a reform programme designed to cut the number of its civil servants by half. Given China's size, this meant a projected four million people (The Economist 1998; see also Government of Uganda 1990; Government of Ghana 1992).



With application of the new public management (NPM: see later) also being canvassed, the period from Reagan's election to the late 1990s was the incoming tide in public management (ironically in view small-government of the ideology that drove it). But just as PMR was founded, the tide turned and the Washington Consensus broke down.

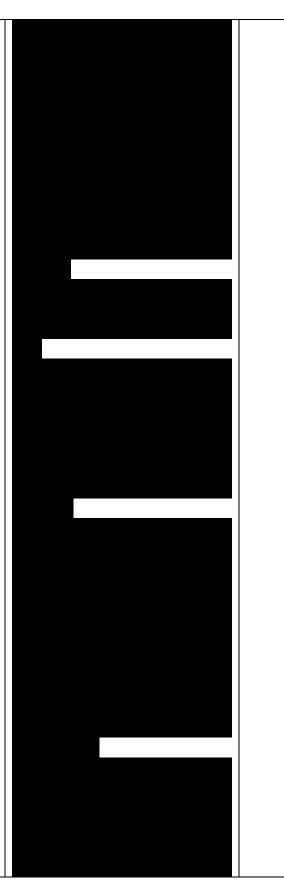
Once again politics played a part, with centrist or social



democratic governments coming to power in the mid-1990s in France, Germany, the UK and the USA. Bill Clinton duly appointed a new president of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, who restored the poverty status quo ante that had prevailed under Robert McNamara, the last Democrat appointee.

Wollfensohn's ambition was to create a 'knowledge bank' that would deal in the soft power of expertise rather then the hard power of loan conditionalities. To some extent that orientation offset the loss of the Bank and the IMF's hegemony, which slipped away as a result of:

(3) the increasing significance of foreign direct investment in developing countries, dwarfing the funds available to the IMF and the Bank (not to mention other aid



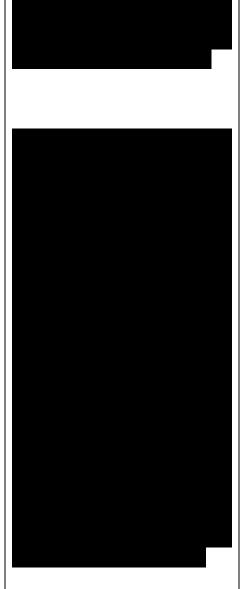
donors and lenders);

(4) initiative the poverty passing from Washington to the United Nations in New York through the rise of the human development paradigm, embodied in the UN's annual Human Development Reports, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), nearest thing the to development consensus in the early years of the twenty-first century (Hulme 2007).

However, a further reason for the collapse of the Washington Consensus was intrinsic public management. By mid-1990s the World Bank was evaluating 40 per cent of its civil service reform projects as unsatisfactory at completion (Nunberg 1997). Interestingly, the same was true in China, which recapitulated the Bank's experience all by itself: after repeated rounds of downsizing, central and local government ended up with more, not fewer employees (Burns 2003).

This was consistent with outcomes for the Bank's structural adjustment programmes at large (World Bank 1998).

Why the failure of reform? The Bank's evaluations mostly

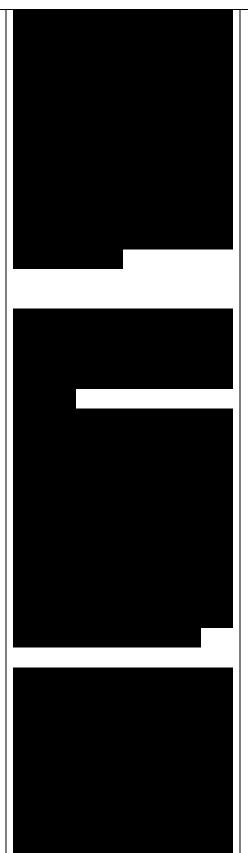


blamed 'political commitment' (Nunberg 1997). Since that was an explanation that begged as many questions as it answered, auest began for determinants of commitment (McCourt 2003). This has arguably been one of the most important advances in developing country public management, and we will have more to say about it later.

POST-WASHINGTON DEVELOPMENTS: NPM AND ANTI-CORRUPTION INITIATIVES

So far, readers whose interests are mostly in the industrialized countries will have seen much that they recognize. But after Consensus the Washington period of convergence in public management between rich and poor countries, developing countries came to a fork in the road where they weighed the potential of the new public management and found wanting.

That statement will seem strange to readers for whom NPM is shorthand for whatever right-wing governments (and the World Bank) did to the public sector, including downsizing (see, for instance, Batley 1999). But as this author has argued elsewhere (McCourt 2001a), the Washington model



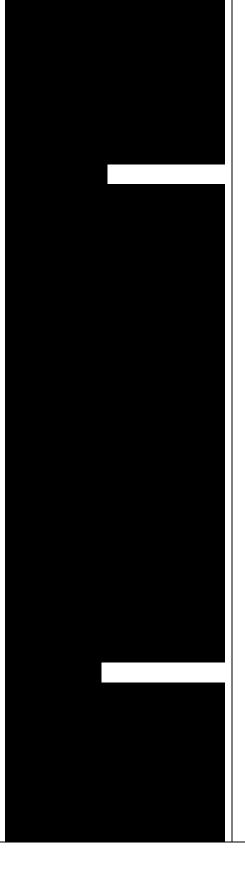
and public management NPM should be seen analytically historically and distinct. In rich countries, the former was a retrenchment programme whose aim was a smaller state via downsizing, while the latter was recovery programme that ensued when governments recognized that retrenchment had left them with much more than a minimal state on their hands. Its aim was a better state via the importation of privatesector management, and it had its apotheosis in Al Gore's 'Reinventing Government' programme.

This second phase of reform is reflected in the taxonomy of the OECD's (1995)mid-1990s survey, whose elements are administrative devolution (as opposed to political decentralization), competition and contracting, measures to induce a customer orientation, performance contracts and indicators, and improved management of human resources and information.

Certainly there have been instances of individual elements of the NPM model, with reports of contracting, citizen's charters and executive agencies in all three continents of the South

(Bennett et al. 1998; Talbot and Caulfield 2002). However, overall the incidence has been modest (McCourt and Minogue 2001), and contributors to PMR have played a useful role in explaining why that is (see Appendix).

Thus **PMR** has published accounts of UK-style devolved financial management in the South African police that ignored the dynamics of power in the local interest groups; citizen's charters in India that overlooked the fact that citizens who lacked access to any services would not have the luxury of demanding better ones; performance contracting in Ghana that made unrealistic assumptions about local capacity and political neutrality; proposed administrative devolution in Nepal that took no account of corruption at lower administrative levels: and malfunctioning accountability mechanisms in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka (respectively Collier 2004; Haque 2005; Larbi 2001; McCourt 2001b; and 2008). Samaratunge et al. (2002)skilful Cheung's analysis of professional resistance to NPM reforms in the Hong Kong health service, which echoes Pollitt's (1990) early analysis of the impact of NPM reforms in the UK, is the

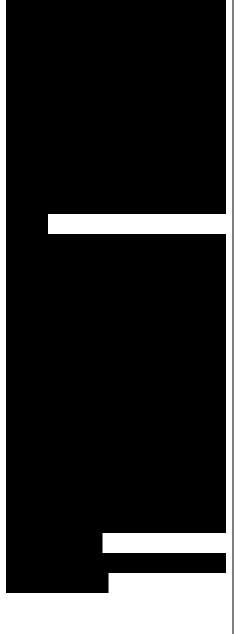


exception that proves the rule here. Following the doctrine of 'one country, two systems', which set the pattern for Hong Kong's return to the motherland in 1997, Hong Kong's governance still has as much in common with the UK as with the rest of China.

is consistent with It our contributors' predominantly negative view that the World Bank never really took up NPM in the way that it adopted downsizing. Certainly NPM had its advocates in the World Bank, especially those who were impressed by New Zealand's benchmark reforms (such as Bale and Dale 1998), but the sceptics carried greater weight in the long run (Nunberg 1995; Schick 1998).

Corruption: Integrity before quality

The explanation of why NPM largely failed to take root in developing countries is not wholly flattering to them. For one thing, the effective emphasis on service integrity at the expense of quality, as in the case of Nepal above, was tantamount to an admission that corruption and nepotism were





endemic.

The democratization and opening up of the media that followed the collapse communism in central and eastern Europe (the political orientation of what was the Second World now survives mostly in pockets of what we used to call the Third World) created demand for transparency that Cold War politics no longer allowed governments and their western allies to ignore. In some cases the arrival of political competition created corruption or patronage where none had been before (McCourt 2007). However, as a warning against crude periodizations of the kind that we struggle to avoid in a brief review like this one, the fight against corruption is an instance of continuity rather than disjuncture in public management. There was active concern before the fall of the Berlin Wall (Klitgaard 1988), the main plank and Singapore's widely imitated corruption controls was put in place as long ago as 1960 (Quah 2002).

Recent efforts (Rose-Ackerman 2004) have concentrated on the

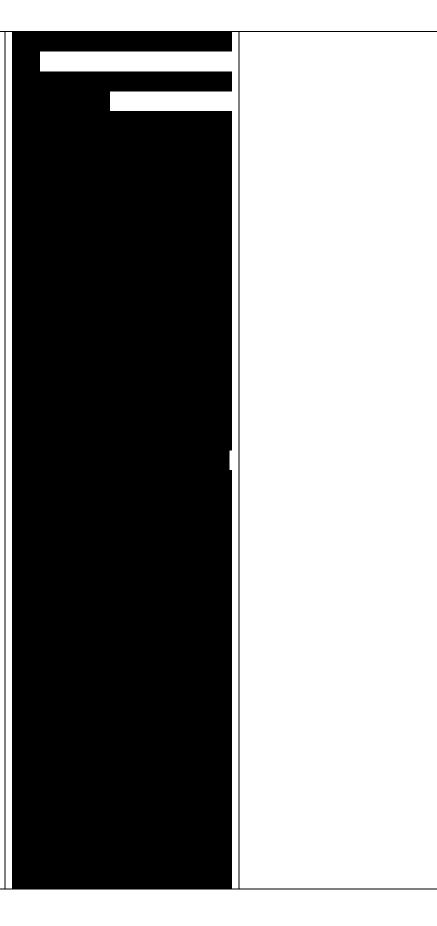
laws and institutions governing corruption and instilling accountability through transparency, with the hope that civil service reform will allow governments to pay higher salaries to a smaller number of officials (the Singapore model again). They are reflected in the stand-alone corruption revenue-gathering agency model, which is structurally very similar to the **NPM** executive agency model, although it has a separate policy origin. There are examples in a number of countries, which include Mozambique and Zambia. Unfortunately, even this designedly ethical model is not immune from corruption, as Fjeldstad (2003) has shown in the case of Tanzania's Revenue Authority, where high wages and managerial autonomy have co-existed with a high level of corruption.

Thus Fjeldstad, Rose-Ackerman and others are thrown back on the existence or otherwise of 'political will' to keep anticorruption initiatives on course. We turn now to political will and its roots in political economy.

THE RETURN OF POLITICS Governance and 'drivers of change'

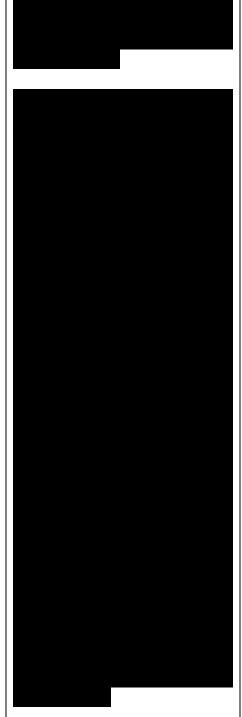
As noted earlier, the inadequacy of 'political will' or commitment as an explanation for the failure of reform opened the door to a new emphasis on politics and governance.

Overcoming its initial inclination to define commitment the as determination or otherwise of political leaders to do what Washington believed they should do, the World Bank bowed to the weight of the early 1990s studies of the political economy of reform to which we have referred. In a landmark publication it recognized that 'Successful reform depends primarily on a country's institutional and political characteristics' (World Bank 1998: 52, 53; see also McCourt 2003). That recognition has fuelled the development of a governance new model. shares with the First World model of the same name an emphasis on institutions, in both cases derived from the New Institutional Economics (Toye 1995). But it has an explicitly political dimension, as in the influential version of the model which underlies the World Bank's governance survev series, with its elements of accountability, voice and



political stability and lack of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption (see also Hyden et al. 2004; NEPAD 2004).

Acknowledging politics has also ushered in major investments by the World Bank and the Swedish and UK governments in studies of what drives policy change individual countries (Dahl-Ostergaard et al. 2005). They have pointed to generic factors technical like capacity, insulation from societal interests and building incentives for politicians to embark on reform (Robinson 2007); and country-specific factors like the importance of civil society and the media in the case of Zambia (Duncan et al. 2003). Seen through a political lens, even the hoary concept of capacity building, humble significant continuing activity, has acquired political dimension, with evidence that it can be intimately affected by political preferences, calendars and institutions (Grindle 2006; see also Harrow 2001).



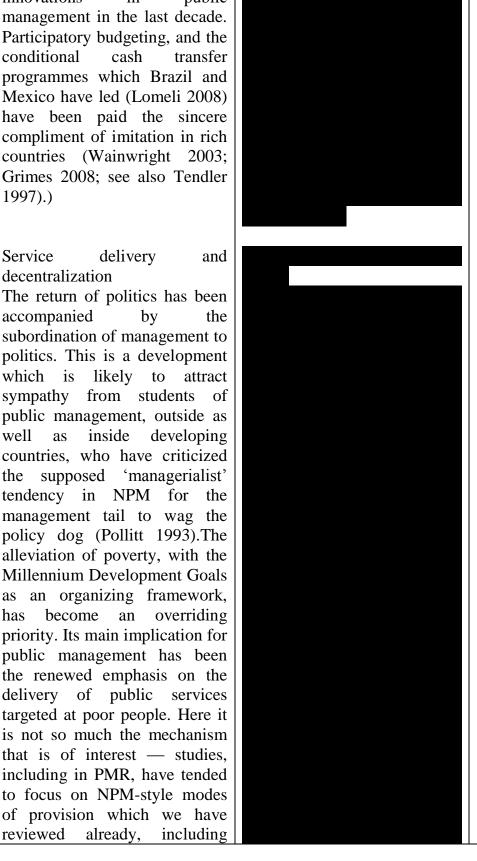
The 'new public governance' in developing countries It should be clear from even our brief account that governance in development is quite different from what the editor of this journal has called the 'new public governance' in industrialized countries, with its central role for self-organizing inter-organizational networks as distinct from the bureaucratic hierarchies of classic public administration and the contractual relationships of NPM (Osborne 2006). However, unlike the key NPM elements, this post-NPM development has taken root in some places, including South Africa (Mitlin 2007) notably, Brazil. One piece of evidence is Gomes and Gomes' (2008) study of policy making in Brazilian municipal districts, showing the influence stakeholders who included the private sector and trade unions. But there is even more intriguing evidence from Brazil that has yet to make its way into public management journals: participative policy making in the health sector through regular consultative fora (Shankland Cornwall 2007). and and with experiments local participatory budgeting (Gert and Sintomer 2005). (It is worth observing that Brazil may be the developing country that has made the most interesting

innovations public in management in the last decade. Participatory budgeting, and the conditional cash transfer programmes which Brazil and Mexico have led (Lomeli 2008) have been paid the sincere compliment of imitation in rich countries (Wainwright 2003; Grimes 2008; see also Tendler 1997).)

Service delivery and decentralization The return of politics has been accompanied by the subordination of management to politics. This is a development which is likely to attract sympathy from students public management, outside as well inside developing countries, who have criticized the supposed 'managerialist' tendency in NPM for management tail to wag the policy dog (Pollitt 1993). The alleviation of poverty, with the Millennium Development Goals as an organizing framework, has become an overriding priority. Its main implication for public management has been the renewed emphasis on the delivery of public services targeted at poor people. Here it is not so much the mechanism that is of interest — studies, including in PMR, have tended

already,

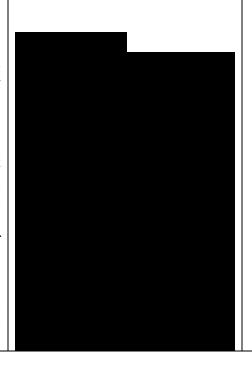
reviewed



contracting out and the use of non-state providers (Batley 2006) — as the content: there has been a renewed emphasis on education and health, given the MDGs that relate to them. That has led to sector specialists taking a fresh interest in public management (see, for example, WHO 2006), but perhaps not as yet to public management specialists taking a reciprocal interest in education and health.

Decentralization

Service delivery has been a major impetus for decentralization, the last of the recent developments that we review. Once again in keeping with our emphasis on politics, it is political decentralization rather NPM-style than managerial devolution that has significant.2 if been But increasing responsiveness citizen needs was its rationale, then the evidence from both Africa and Asia suggests that it has fallen short of expectations

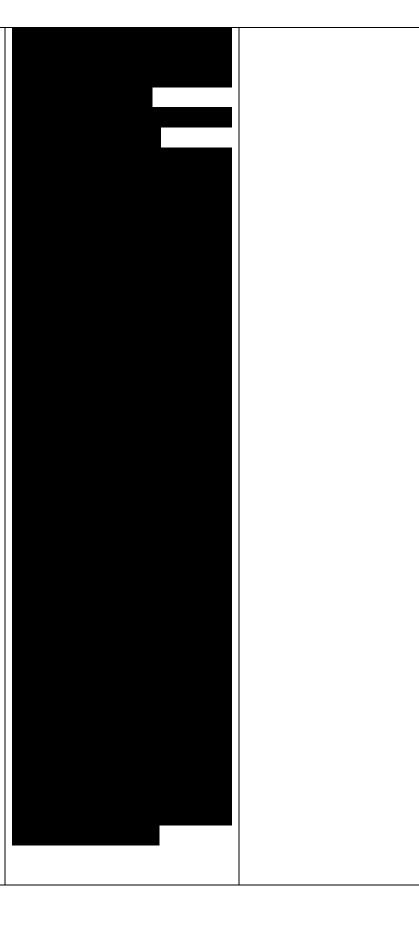


(Crook and Sverrisson 2001; Turner 2006).

THE RETURN OF DIVERGENCE

Engrossed in the minutiae of political 'drivers of change', we have rarely paused to ask ourselves why domestic politics should be so important after all. Were we not supposed to have entered a globalized world of accelerating movement people and information across national frontiers, a world of universal models where policy formation would increasingly mean policy transfer from the centre the periphery (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000)?

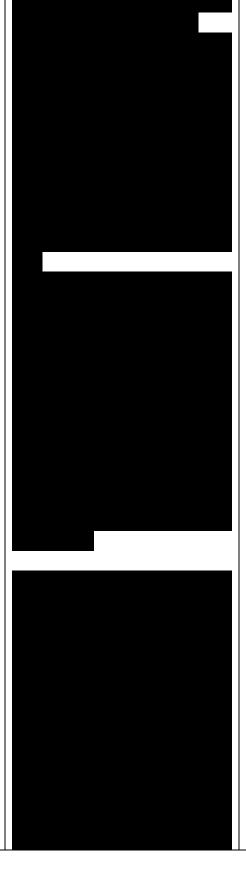
What is significant here is the almost unanimous finding of the early 1990s political economy studies that the determinants of public management reform were not just political, but domestic: it was national, not international politics which was decisive. That finding implicit in the influential report of the Commission on Growth and Development (2008), which recognized that countries could growth find down quite different paths.



We suggest two reasons for this state of affairs.

Globalization (1) in economics has run ahead of politics. globalization in Strangely enough. national governments can more easily ignore foreign governments and international agencies in the political sphere than they can ignore international investors, whose penetration of the economic sphere can be reversed only with considerable pain. Even if Kagan (2008) is right to argue that US military power still dictates the terms of international relations, the USA and other outsiders are mostly unable to dictate domestic policy: governments really are masters in their own houses. If that is true even in Iraq (Cockburn 2008), it is all the more true in countries where foreign forces are not ensconced.

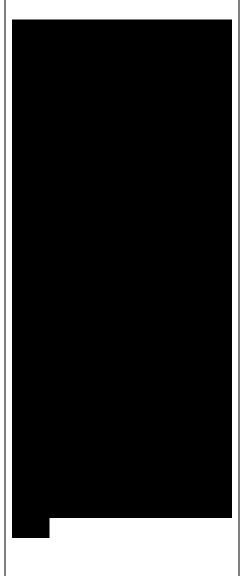
In a domain where the (2) soft power of ideas counts for more than military might, we should also reckon with the long-term consequence of former European colonies gradually loosening ties with their mother countries, as rising generations of confident public officials steer an independent course. Malaysia's 'Look East' policy, framed release Malaysia from instinctive dependence on its former

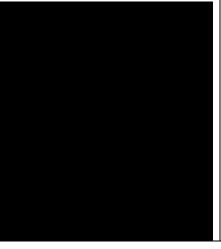


imperial ruler, the UK, is just one self-conscious example.

of Thus freer movement information and people has indeed led to policy transfer, but on a multi-polar basis, with several developing countries borrowing 'Vision 2020' from Malaysia and conditional cash transfers crossing the South Atlantic from Latin America to Tanzania, and with even freely borrowed policies refracted through the prism of national political economy and channelled by the pathdependent nature of the governance institutions of (McCourt 2002; McCourt and Lee 2007; Melo 2007). And what may look like an import at first glance can turn out to owe little to foreign models, as Turner (2006) found with decentralization in three different East Asian countries.

We should be under no illusion that domestic sovereignty is necessarily more benign than global hegemony: we need only note the obduracy of Burma's military regime in the face of the Cyclone Nargis disaster just as we completed this article, in a region where American power, pace Kagan, counts for little. But benign or otherwise, we suggest that it is the





enduring power of sovereign states within their own borders which explains the failure of the attempts to induce reform from outside, and which ultimately explains the return of divergence in public management.

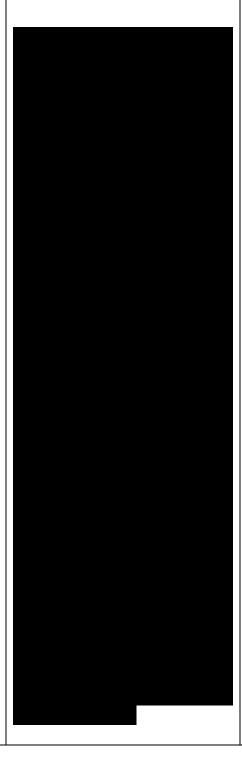
CONCLUSION: TOWARDS EMBEDDED PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

this review of recent developments we suggest that what has emerged from the break-up of the Washington Consensus is a world heterogeneous national priorities shaped by domestic politics and institutions. Our review implies a need for public management specialists (and no doubt other kinds of specialist as well) to descend from the Olympus of universal prescriptive models like NPM to the national politics and institutions in which we have increasingly realized that public management is embedded, and from which it is ever more obvious that it derives its mandate in a world of democratizing independent nation states.

Hence rise of the the governance model. whose significance for us might be expressed in a paraphrase of the English poet Rudyard Kipling's rhetorical question: what do public they know of

management who only public management know?

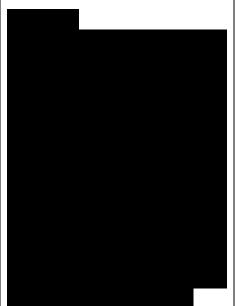
public and For reformers students there is a need to reculer pour mieux sauter, to take a step back in order to jump further. Perhaps we have been slow to do that because we have been cushioned by the compartmentalization of academic knowledge, the firmcentred and politicsinsulated mainstream management studies that public management draws on, and the flattering centrality of public management itself in the Washington consensus era. However, after a temporary eclipse, the demise of the Washington Consensus view that the State could do much harm but little good has given public management opportunity to return to central role, one which in this iteration is positive rather than negative, and in which Brazil and countries like it rather than Washington might lodestar. And so we conclude with the suggestion that it is time for us to complete the groundwork of political analysis in order to return to the perennial and proper task of refining public policy instruments that will support



development in the three continents of the South.

NOTES

- It is worth noting that the scale has been equally dramatic in industrialized countries. Staff retrenchment programmes were carried out between 1987 and 1992 the height of the downsizing boom in the public sectors of twenty-two of the twenty-seven member countries of the OECD, making it by some distance their most widespread Human Resource initiative (OECD 1994).
- 2 It is odd that studies in this area going back over many years are always of decentralization rather than centralization, suggesting that the centre has unobtrusive ways of either hanging on to power or clawing it back.



2 Điều kỳ lại là các nghiên cứu trong lĩnh vực này đang được tiến hành về bản chất luôn luôn là phân cấp chứ không phải tập trung, cho thấy rằng trung tâm có những cách thức riêng hoặc tăng tốc quyền lực họặc thu hồi nó lại.

