The 21st Century Public Manager

Challenges, People and Strategies

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Preface

I finished writing this book during a five-week research leave in New York. The apartment we stayed in was located in a 'not so gentrified' part of Brooklyn. Being confronted with the raw side of the metropole – endless piles of garbage, dilapidated housing, poor and homeless people wandering around, migrants selling stuff on the streets hoping to get by – I was strengthened in my resolve to finish this book. I became even more convinced than I already was that the world needs good government, good administrators, and effective public managers; in short: that public management matters. More so, I felt that by offering a book that was hands-on, actor-driven, and speaking to the daily life of public managers who often operate in tough circumstances, my work might even make a difference to some of them, albeit in the smallest possible way.

Back in 2014, I started writing this book for two main reasons. First of all, I was inspired and energized by all the (aspiring) public managers I interacted with during executive programmes, classes, conferences, and research interviews, the vast majority of them working tirelessly every day to create public value in tough circumstances. I have learned much more from them than they could ever learn from me. I continue to enjoy informal interactions and friendships with many alumni from dozens of countries, junior and senior. At the same time, I couldn't help noticing that even the practitioner-oriented and 'down-to-earth' topics, readings, and cases I discussed with them were often too scholarly and too distant from their hard realities, particularly for public managers in developing contexts.

This observation brings me to my second reason. I wanted to write a book that would speak to (aspiring) public managers across the globe. A book that would take their issues, pains, and challenges but also their optimism, clever solutions, and coping mechanisms as a starting point. A book that would categorize and examine current trends and drivers that didn't get the attention they deserved in our conversations as there was always other content that 'had' to be covered. A book, above all, that would take senior practitioners seriously by providing them with examples, perspectives, and strategies

grounded in the latest research evidence and best practices while being accessible and actor-driven at the same time. A book, lastly, that would be relevant and timely to public managers in the developing as well as the developed world, in the West and the non-West. Still, all too often – intentionally or not – books and articles propagate views, frameworks, and models that originated in the West but may be less useful in other settings.

At this stage, it is important to say a few things about the nature of this book. This book is not a research monograph reporting in detail on original empirical research, nor a conceptual book propagating one particular theory of or approach to public management (if there even is one). There is no central framework or 'model' guiding the various chapters beyond the notion that 21st century public managers operate in a VUCA world – one characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. Rather, this book is a timely, practitioner-oriented teaching text for MPA (Master of Public Administration), MPM (Master of Public Management), and executive education audiences across the globe, made up of aspiring public managers who aim to improve their skills and expand their horizons in order to face a 21st century operating environment.

Thus, instead of taking the classical 'topical' textbook approach, with a chapter on performance, another on political-administrative relations, and yet another on accountability or ethics, this book is structured 'the other way around'. It departs from the key trends and demands facing public managers in the years to come, to discuss how existing research and real-life examples help them to make sense of those emerging trends and managerial demands. This was what I had in mind when I started writing and organizing my initial ideas almost three years ago. Now, five versions of the outline and dozens of versions of the manuscript later, the book is finally here. I genuinely hope you will find it helpful, recognizable, and – from time to time – inspiring. I have tried to keep the content and literature up to date until the very last moment.

Finally, I have to thank a number of individuals who played an important role in the process of writing this book. First of all, series editor, colleague, and friend Paul 't Hart has been an amazing support from the early stages onwards. Paul, your constructively critical and always timely feedback has helped a lot to 'keep me going', particularly when energy was low and writer's block was

near. Second, Palgrave editors Steven Kennedy and Lloyd Langman, and editorial assistant Tuur Driesser (who happens to share a not-so-common first name with my son), have been accommodating, supporting, and pragmatic in their advice and support. I also thank the anonymous reviewer for the valuable comments on my draft manuscript.

Four of my research assistants have contributed immensely to this book – each in their different ways and with their own styles and strengths – and they deserve special mention here. Carolyn Law from Hong Kong, Awa Touray from Gambia, Assel Mussagulova from Kazakhstan, and Aprajita Singh from India: a big thank you! Their diversity in backgrounds is illustrative of the diversity of viewpoints, contexts, and real-life examples and cases I've tried to include in the book, and the diversity in my working environment that I've come to appreciate so much over the past few years. All of you have contributed to realizing my ambition of producing a truly global public management textbook. My colleague and editor Libby Morgan Berri has played a tremendously important role by reviewing and editing each of the chapters. Libby, you have a sharp eye for detail and consistency, and your contributions to this book have been invaluable.

On a more personal note, I would like to thank my three parents, Katie, Gerrit, and Mieke, who raised me well and have always supported my efforts and ambitions, and my brothers and sisters (in law) whom I often miss dearly, being over 7,000 miles apart. Our invaluable nanny Zel deserves special thanks as well: she enables us to work hard while spending enough quality time as a family. But most of all, thanks, love, and appreciation go out to my amazing family. Marjanne, Tuur, and Lauren: you make my life enjoyable and worthwhile every day. I have asked a lot from each of you during the process of writing this book, particularly in the last couple of months. I promise not to start another book project for at least two years!

ZEGER VAN DER WAL
Singapore, 23 September 2016

Introduction

Being a public manager in a VUCA world

Imagine being a manager in a government agency anywhere on this planet. Your average working day consists of many activities. Organizing meetings and setting agendas to discuss progress on policy and service delivery related activities. Enduring tenured senior staff who are unable to keep up with their rapidly changing environment. Guiding junior staff who need to be carefully managed but don't think they do. Explaining to impatient political masters that complex policy decisions can't be reached within a week's time. Negotiating, communicating, and consulting with stakeholders across sectors on how to jointly design and produce services. Fending off traditional and citizen journalists who scrutinize your performance in catering to a non-stop media environment that feeds off crises and failures.

All these and more may easily fill up your everyday schedule – a schedule that you seem unable to control, let alone direct. Surely, being a public manager has never been easy, but it seems to become more challenging all the time. Four key features seem to increasingly characterize your operating environment.

First, more and more often you and your staff members are confronted with, or rather surprised by, disruptive events, scandals, crises, and shocks. The challenges that you face in such situations are not necessarily hard to understand – you have even planned and practised for some of them. However, their timing and occurrence are seemingly unexpected and their duration unknown. Due to increased interconnectedness, even small events may trigger other disruptive events and crises. The increased occurrence of such events results in larger *volatility*.

Second, you are more frequently confronted with sudden leadership transitions that completely change the outlook of policies and programmes you have been working on for months, sometimes years. You usually understand why the transition happened or why it was

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inevitable, but you lack crucial information about short-term implications and cues on how to proceed. You and your staff want to develop scenarios and actionables but you have to wait for things to unfold. Because of transitions such as these, you experience more *uncertainty*.

Third, you are increasingly designing and implementing policies collaboratively with a variety of stakeholders, each with their own agenda, worldview, and style. In addition, you have to manage an increasingly diverse workforce, in terms of gender, age, orientation, and background. You proceed based on gut feeling and experience, but you find it hard to effectively engage so many interconnected issues and characters. The increasingly collaborative and intergenerational nature of your work are just two examples of growing *complexity*.

Fourth, you are pressured to implement 'innovative' and untested new solutions as technologies evolve and tech-savvy citizens demand better service. However, as you pilot and experiment, expectations and potential outcomes are completely unclear. Solution providers, political masters, and end users have different, competing objectives, some of which are unclear or unknown to you. Piloting and experimenting is surrounded with *ambiguity*.

Taken together, these four examples illustrate how a 'VUCA world' (Johansen 2007), characterized by *volatility, uncertainty, complexity*, and *ambiguity,* will increasingly shape your operating environment. This operating environment will be to some extent 'unknown', not only in terms of projected outcomes, but also in terms of the required skills, strategies, and parameters. A now famous, but at the time ridiculed, statement by former US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld at a Pentagon briefing in 2002 nicely captures this feature:

> Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me because as we know, there are 'known knowns'; there are things we know we know. We also know there are 'known unknowns'; that is to say we know there are some things we don't know. But there are also 'unknown unknowns' – the ones we don't know we don't know.

As the four features show, VUCA events vary in terms of containing 'unknowns'. Issues surrounded by *volatility* and *uncertainty* are more 'known', but challenging in their own right. They require a certain degree of flexibility and adaptiveness, together with foresight

and strategic planning capabilities. Situations characterized by *complexity* and *ambiguity* are least 'known', requiring experimentation, piloting, and the engagement of unconventional expertise. Figure 1.1 displays the key characteristics of a VUCA operating environment.

Twenty-first century public management: more challenging but also more rewarding?

The features illustrate why your VUCA operating environment will be challenging in various ways. Stakeholders, including new generations of employees, act like expert know-it-alls while demanding authoritative leadership and evidence-based solutions at the same time. Media eagerly portray missteps and scandals while being much less interested in steady progress and small yet important wins. Political masters are so demanding and ambiguous that loyally serving them while preserving your values, motivations, and neutrality is hardly possible. Unlimited technological opportunities and innovations 'promise the world' but far exceed your human and financial

FIGURE 1.1   Characteristics of a VUCA operating environment

- **V**olatility

Events of unexpected ocurrence and duration that disrupt systems and norms

- **U**ncertainty

Events with unclear short-term and medium-term consequences

Events and issues which features and interrelations are hard to understand

Events and issues marked by contested, hidden, and inconsistent information

- **C**omplexity

- **A**mbiguity
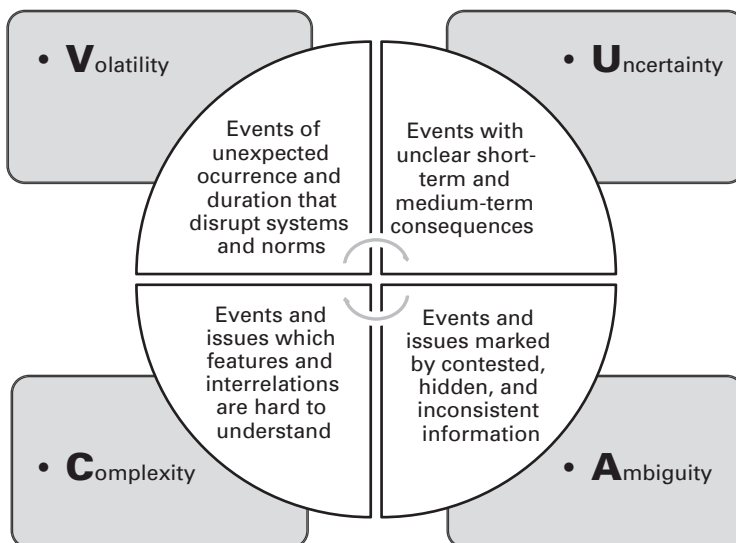
capabilities, let alone your procedural and regulatory space. Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

Certainly, the context in which you operate has its own unique constraints and opportunities. Political environments may be more or less stable, bureaucratic influence on policy outcomes more or less considerable, and change and innovation enthusiastically embraced or fiercely opposed. But, wherever you are, you will share many challenges and frustrations with your counterparts across the globe, just as you will share many passions and ambitions. Such passions and ambitions may have been important drivers to join the public sector workforce in the first place, perhaps in an era quite different from the one today, and you must continue to uphold and nurture them to maintain a sense of professional pride and job satisfaction.

However, emerging developments also provide exciting opportunities for achieving unprecedented levels of public service excellence, together with citizens and vanguards of change from other sectors. In order to be an effective 21ˢᵗ century public manager, you will need to acquire and display a variety of skillsets and mindsets to turn various new challenges into immense opportunities.

If you are an aspiring public manager, things will certainly be more challenging by the time you join the managerial ranks of a government agency. At the same time, managing public agencies and policies in the coming decades will be one of the most exciting, interesting, and rewarding activities you can think of – regardless of whether you're operating in an emerging megacity, a developing country about to join the ranks of developed countries, or a surprisingly resilient developed welfare state that has been declared dead many times before. The same technological revolutions, assertive stakeholders, and new tech-savvy, entrepreneurial colleagues that produce challenges also create unlimited opportunities for public sector excellence.

Preparing for a VUCA world

If you are passionate about creating public value and driven by the intellectual challenges generated by the increasing complexity of 21ˢᵗ century public management, this book was written for you. You may find it inspiring and hopefully even helpful. If you're driven by job security, routine, stability, and predictability of your operating environment, or simply by leaving the office at 5 every day until you retire with a decent pension, you may want to stop reading now.

After all, if there's one thing we know about being a public manager in the coming decades – and there's much we do not and cannot know – it is that the job will become less routinized and demarcated in terms of time, space, task, and policy area, and more complex, risky, multi-faceted, cross-sectoral, and international. A key question in this book is therefore how public managers can prepare for and respond to a VUCA world. Should they do away with current, proven routines and structures – the 'old' – and rush into an unknown future with little guidance other than trying to be 'flexible', 'open', and 'adaptive'? Can new guidelines and strategies be formulated or is it merely 'anything goes', with public managers holding on for dear life?

Above all, public managers should not use the notion of a VUCA world as an excuse to shirk away from the hard and increasingly painful work of strategy and planning (Bennett and Lemoine 2014). Indeed, the VUCA concept first emerged in military circles in the post–Cold War environment of the early 1990s precisely to *stimulate* thinking about planning and preparing for operating environments increasingly characterized by 'wild cards' (Ho 2008, 2010; Petersen 2000). Wild cards are unlikely, high-impact events that are complex, expensive, and seldom politically expedient to anticipate and plan for.

How can public managers begin to think about identifying and responding to the various types of VUCA events? Figure 1.2 outlines basic approaches for public managers to address situations characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, or ambiguity, based on the work of Bennett and Lemoine (2014: 2).

Basic guides like these may aid public managers in making sense of dynamic operating environments. In fact, one could say that being able to operate in a VUCA environment is the overarching 'critical competency' of a 21st century public manager. However, we need to get much more specific about the roles, competencies, and values that public managers need to acquire and embody *to successfully perform in this environment* – to create and deliver 'public value' (Benington and Moore 2011: 2) in the 21st century.

This book will critically assess these roles, competencies, and values in the context of various 21st century megatrends – such as economic interconnectedness, demographic changes, and climate change – that will impact public managers no matter where they work. In doing so, this book offers realistic yet promising perspectives for

FIGURE 1.2   Identifying, preparing for, and responding to VUCA events

	COMPLEXITY	VOLATILITY
– How well can you predict the results of your actions? +	**Characteristics**: Many interconnected parts and variables. Some information may be available or can be predicted, but the volume or nature of the information can be overwhelming to process. **Example**: You are implementing a new policy strategy across various domains and departments, each with their own rules, values, and operating procedures. **Approach**: Bring up or develop expertise and resources, (re)structure.	**Characteristics**: Challenges are unexpected or unstable and may be of unknown duration, but not necessarily hard to understand. Knowledge is often available. **Example**: You have to respond to a disruptive event, disaster, or crisis that obstructs service delivery and potentially endangers citizens. **Approach**: Build in slack and devote resources to resilience and preparedness – e.g., stockpile inventory or overbuy talent.
	AMBIGUITY	UNCERTAINTY
	Characteristics: Causal relationships are completely unclear. No precedents exist. You face many unknown unknowns. **Example**: You decide to implement a radical and untested new technology to affect client behaviour in healthcare settings. **Approach**: Experiment. Understanding cause and effect requires generating hypotheses and testing them. Design experiments such that broad lessons can be learned.	**Characteristics**: Despite a lack of some crucial information, basic cause and effect are known. Change is possible but not a given. **Example**: A sudden political transition changes the outlook of policies and programs you have been working on over the past two years. **Approach**: Invest in information and scenario building capacity: collect, interpret, and share information. This works best in conjunction with structural changes that reduce ongoing uncertainty.
	– How much do you know about the situation? +	

Adapted from: Bennett and Lemoine 2014: 2.

public managers. Such perspectives are now paramount because all too many books and reports offer little more than a 'complaint session' about the inadequacies of bureaucracies in addressing and mitigating 21st century challenges.

Public managers: who they are and what they do

Before we start our journey into the largely unknown world and profile of the 21st century public manager, we should define who and what public managers in the 21st century are. In short: provide some descriptions before we move into predictions and prescriptions. Here, various definitions and typologies float around, from narrow

to broad. Noordegraaf (2015), for instance, in his book *Public Management* that is part of this series, defines public managers broadly as 'those who lead in the public domain'.

Similar to 't Hart's book in this series, *Understanding Public Leadership* (2014a), Noordegraaf addresses the debate on how 'managers' differ from 'leaders'. Both assert that the two concepts may denote different roles, activities, and attributes, and therefore justify being analytically distinct. Within the context of this book, however, it is important to emphasize that the focus lies with public managers from a *positional rather than functional perspective* (cf. Noordegraaf 2004). Even though non-managers may very well lead or manage, and managers may not, this book focuses on individuals with managerial positions. In addition, this book does not focus on politicians, one of the three types of public leaders 't Hart discusses (2014a: 23), even though the political dimension of public management features throughout the book.

Thus, this book is written for (future) managers, from mid-level to senior, in public and semi-public sector organizations such as ministries, executive agencies, international, regional and municipal government organizations, statutory boards, public hospitals, universities, state-owned enterprises, and government-linked companies. Such managers can be politically appointed but most of them will be career officials who have risen through the ranks of administrative systems and bear responsibility for policies, programmes, and people (Van Wart, Hondeghem and Schwella 2015). Many of them will have graduate degrees, often of a specialist nature, and participate in leadership development or 'fast track' programmes of various types. Table 1.1 shows four commonly distinguished types of public managers (see also Noordegraaf 2015).

The 'type 1' top manager – or in some countries, executive – is the most senior. However, line managers, programme and project directors, and staff managers exist in many varieties. They range from mid-level managers running one particular policy area, programme, or function with few staff members, to heavyweights who run departments, programmes, or units with thousands of employees and budgets of hundreds of millions of dollars.

Type 1 and type 2 managers engage mostly in strategic policy advice as well as managerial, legislative, and budgetary work, whereas type 3 managers and some type 1 managers conduct more hands-on

TABLE 1.1 Types of public managers according to position

Type	Activities and responsibilities	Examples
1. Top manager or executive	*Type 1 public managers* are ultimately responsible and accountable for their organizations and departments, both internally and externally (with most formal external communication until now being the exclusive domain of the political boss)	(Deputy) Permanent secretaries and secretary generals, directors and director generals, (deputy) CEOs of agencies, public hospitals and educational institutions, inspector generals
2. Line manager	*Type 2 public managers* are 'regular' managers in ministries, agencies, and other public organizations who bear responsibility for a particular policy directorate, project, and/ or unit, accountable to type 1 public managers (and sometimes political bosses)	Policy directors, heads of unit, heads of department, directors of divisions and clusters
3. Programme manager or project manager	*Type 3 public managers* are managers who are responsible for particular policy programmes, taskforces, projects, networks, and collaborative, sometimes temporary structures. They can be accountable to type 1 and type 2 managers (and if a particular programme or issue is of high political salience, to political bosses)	Programme directors, taskforce managers, project managers, strategic planners, network managers, heads of temporary collaborative arrangements
4. Staff manager	*Type 4 public managers* are responsible for managing staff departments in the areas of personnel, information (IT, knowledge), finance, HR, housing, and facilities, usually accountable to type 1 public managers (but seldom to political bosses)	HR and personnel directors, finance directors, communication and public affairs directors, IT directors, facility managers

implementation and service delivery activities, certainly at the local level. Type 4 managers mostly provide operational, legal, and strategic support to the other three types. Increasingly, though, roles, activities, and responsibilities will blur between managerial types. Some suggest future public sectors will consist of a concentrated core of highly skilled strategic policy advisors with most of the implementation and execution of tasks and services outsourced to and shared with other actors (Dickinson and Sullivan 2014; Needham and Mangan 2014).

As such, isn't this rather traditional and seemingly 'neat' distinction between types at odds with the networked and fluid characteristics of the VUCA world? Not necessarily. For decades to come, public managers will have formal job titles, responsibilities, and programmes and departments to run, regardless of the extent of their collaboration with other actors (public, private, and civic). This is the nature of the public sector beast.

However, *what will change* is how *public managers have to simultaneously fulfil sometimes contradictory roles* to survive 21st century operating environments, requiring various traditional, recurrent, and new *skills, competencies, and values underpinning these roles*. The remainder of this book will critically outline and discuss these roles, skills, competencies, and values against the backdrop of global megatrends that place new demands on public managers.

Outline

The outline below specifies how the remaining chapters of this book address these key topics in more detail. Figure 1.3 provides a visual overview.

After chapter '"Traditional" Versus "New"' has positioned public managers across time by providing a critical overview of their traditional, recurrent, and new roles, skills, and values, chapter 'Trends and Drivers' identifies key global megatrends that will affect the organizational environment of public managers in the years to come, such as economic interconnectedness, resource scarcity and climate change, 'ultra-urbanization', and individualism and value pluralism (e.g., Dickinson and Sullivan 2014; KPMG 2013; Needham and Mangan 2014, 2016). Subsequently, chapter 'Demands, Dilemmas, Opportunities' translates these megatrends into seven demands, with associated dilemmas and opportunities.

FIGURE 1.3   Structure and contents of the book

Chapter 2 provides a critical
Overview of traditional and new roles, competencies, and values for public managers

Trends and drivers
• Chapter 3 identifies global megatrends affecting public managers across the globe

Demands, dilemmas, and opportunities
• Chapter 4 identifies seven clusters of managerial demands, dilemmas, and opportunities resulting from these megatrends

Managing seven key 21st century demands
• Chapters 5 to 11 discuss the nature of the seven demands on public managers, and the roles, competencies, and values public managers require to turn them into opportunities

21st century manager: profile and roadmap
Chapters 12 outlines profiles and roadmaps for the 21st century public manager and organization

Chapters 'Managing Stakeholder Multiplicity', 'Managing Authority Turbulence', 'Managing the New Work(force)', 'Managing Innovation Forces', 'Managing Ethical Complexities', 'Managing Short Versus Long Time Horizons', and 'Managing Cross-sectoral Collaboration' are structured around these seven key demands on public managers, illustrating challenges, dilemmas, and opportunities with real-life cases and examples while detailing the competencies and attributes needed to meet each demand and turn challenges into opportunities. Each chapter is structured around a central case featuring a public manager as protagonist. The cases are hypothetical, but all of them are based on real-life events and developments. These chapters make up the core of this book. The last chapter provides a profile of the 21st century public manager, and outlines strategies for making managers and agencies '21st century proof'.

Chapter '"Traditional" Versus "New"', briefly outlines three ideal types of public managers across time as a framework to discuss long-standing, evolving, and new roles, competencies, skills, and values. The chapter argues that effective public managers combine and balance qualities from all three ideal types, dependent on context and setting.

Chapter 'Trends and Drivers', distinguishes various types of change, ranging from gradual to disruptive and unpredictable, before it discusses in detail key 21st century megatrends and how they will affect the lives of public managers across the globe. It provides cases and examples of these megatrends from a variety of geographies and regimes, making the case for a perspective that goes beyond traditional, Western orientations.

Chapter 'Demands, Dilemmas, Opportunities', presents the seven key managerial demands that will structure the remainder of the book, such as 'managing the new work(force)' and 'managing innovation forces'. Subsequently, it translates these demands into seven dilemmas – tough choices reinforced by the ambiguous nature of the demands – and seven unprecedented opportunities for public managers to produce public sector excellence.

Chapter 'Managing Stakeholder Multiplicity', addresses the demand on public managers to serve, respond to, and collaborate with an increasing number of stakeholders, operating in fluid and dynamic networks. The chapter presents tools to map, classify, and engage such networks, arguing that public managers need to develop antennae to anticipate stakeholder dynamics. Competencies such as framing, branding, and storytelling are addressed, along with specific social media and communication skills.

Following on from this, chapter 'Managing Authority Turbulence', discusses fundamental shifts in power structures and traditional notions of hierarchy and authority, even in countries with fairly top-down, authoritative governance structures. Across the globe, assertive, individualized stakeholders question authority, forcing public managers to continuously justify their legitimacy through performance, internally *and* externally. Political astuteness, distributive leadership, and crisis management are key competencies discussed here.

Chapter 'Managing the New Work(force)', critically assesses traits and ambitions of the new workforce amid more fundamental new work practices – the virtual office, blurred lines between professional and personal lives and roles, and 'boundaryless' careers. It will particularly assess effective ways of recruiting, incentivizing, and managing Gen Y and Gen Z, and tapping into their 21st century competencies through reverse mentoring.

Chapter 'Managing Innovation Forces', addresses the balancing act of responding to various (human, natural, technological)

pressures to innovate public sector practices amid legal, constitutional, and budgetary constraints. It discusses the 'hard managerial work' of innovation across all five stages of the innovation process: idea generation, selection, testing, scaling, and diffusion. It also addresses ambiguous public expectations of governments to simultaneously experiment, provide stability, and demonstrate 'value for money'.

Chapter 'Managing Ethical Complexities', addresses emerging ethical challenges and rising – sometimes unrealistic and unfair – ethical expectations of public actors, grounded in a discussion on competing values and loyalties for public managers. The chapter argues for an open perspective towards ethical leadership and balanced integrity management systems.

Chapter 'Managing Short Versus Long Time Horizons', addresses the increasingly important issue of managing very short timelines – driven by the never-ending news cycle – and long timelines, amid a context of creating resilient and sustainable solutions for super-wicked problems. Increasingly accessible foresight capabilities may prove to be enablers for public managers to justify long-term decision-making to various constituents. Challenges in preserving institutional memory and 'selling' foresight products to political masters are discussed.

Chapter 'Managing Cross-sectoral Collaboration', outlines the key characteristics of successful network managers who have to operate in a world where public sectors are one of many actors (and sectors) driving collective problem-solving and service delivery. Recent insights about collaborative public management, co-creation, and co-production, and tri-sector collaboration are presented, together with recent, real-life examples.

The concluding chapter 'The 21ˢᵗ Century Public Manager', provides the contours of the 21ˢᵗ century public manager's profile, and assesses the universalism of such a profile. Then, it outlines how governments should start thinking about recruiting, retaining, and developing effective managers by creating 21ˢᵗ century-proof human resource management (HRM) practices and environments. Clearly, 21ˢᵗ century public management behaviour will only come to the fore in enabling organizational environments, ones characterized by entrepreneurialism, adaptation, and robustness.

Key audience and usage

The 21st Century Public Manager focuses on public managers as a *species* rather than public management as a *discipline*. However, I am mindful of the questionable tendency in management and leadership literature to separate the individual from the environment (cf. 't Hart 2014a). Thus, by looking at the interplay between global megatrends (macro), organizational demands in terms of enabling support structures, cultures, and their design (meso), and individual managerial demands in terms of skills, competencies, and values (micro), managers will be constantly viewed in relation to their operating environments.

While grounded in the latest research insights and evidence, and practices from a variety of jurisdictions, this book is a teaching text for graduate and executive classrooms rather than a research monograph written for peers in the field. At the same time, I hope that colleagues in the fields of public management, public administration, and the general management sciences may also find this book interesting and worthwhile.

The book aims to serve three audiences in particular. First and foremost, I hope to inspire a broad international audience of current and future public managers who participate in professional degree programmes and executive education programmes to upgrade their skills and acquire a mindset of change-readiness without accepting overly easy solutions. The overviews of recent debates and state-of-the-art thinking about public managers and their future operating environments, supported by a wealth of real-life examples and cases from across the globe, make this book directly usable in a variety of pedagogical settings.

Second, senior public sector HRM managers and personnel officers may find this book particularly helpful to strengthen and inspire their thinking about the ideal future workforce, and what it takes to recruit, retain, and build such a workforce.

Third, elements in this book may also meet the needs of senior education specialists, trainers, and curriculum developers as they critically examine whether public policy schools, civil service colleges and academies, and think tanks adequately contribute to building the 21st century managerial workforce. More generally, such specialists and developers,

including senior peers and faculty members of public policy schools, may find the content and cases in this book useful in their teaching and thinking about 21st century public management education.

The (im)possibilities of a global public management book

Before we start our journey by zooming in on trends and emerging strategic issues and their implications for public managers, let me address one remaining elephant in the room. At the outset of a book with the title *The 21st Century Public Manager,* which aspires to be relevant in educational settings across the globe, I am mindful not to fall into the trap of describing trends or prescribing managerial capabilities that are overly generic, or declaring specific managerial ideas or skills as 'dead' or 'obsolete' too soon. After all, this may be highly dependent on the region or country under scrutiny, and the stage of development and reform.

On the contrary, I would argue that a truly meaningful – and globally relevant – debate on the 21st century public manager needs to take stock of both traditional and novel approaches to public management, carefully weighing prescriptions for good governance and management in various contexts. In fact, this is where 'public management talk' and 'public management practice' meet; they go back and forth, they merge and dilute, they adapt to circumstances and contexts through trial and error, benefiting from a healthy competition of ideas.

Such a healthy, and truly global, competition of ideas is paramount in an era of major power shifts and global change. This is even more important because the vast majority of all public management textbooks currently used across the globe are still Western in origin, in terms of the key assumptions, frameworks, and examples they use. Such misbalance is problematic in a world in which regions that differ from the West in their administrative traditions, political development, and institutional cultures account for much of the economic growth, industrial innovations, and novel governance ideas emerging today. Admittedly, given my own background, the majority of frameworks, evidence, and examples I use in this book still come from Western and Anglo-Saxon countries. However, substantive practices and studies from other governance settings are included, discussed, and contrasted with mainstream examples in their implications for managerial capacity and reform potential.

Indeed, as Fukuyama (2013) suggests, different reform paths may apply to countries in upgrading their governance depending on whether institutions have high capacity: increasing the autonomy of public managers may be desirable in a context of high bureaucratic capacity, yet it may prove disastrous if government capacity is lower. Fukuyama argues that whereas, like Singapore, the US and Germany would benefit from giving public managers more autonomy, public managers in China are given too much discretion (2013: 363). *How* public managers can achieve high capacity in a constantly evolving environment is a key topic in this book.

So, even though many of the developments examined in the book apply to countries across the globe, I will identify and assess them with an eye for local differences and particularities. Therefore, cases, examples, and best practices will be used from different countries and regions. For example, increasing use of social media by well-informed citizens and the emergence of the 'hacktivist' as a criticizing and scrutinizing force of government will be prevalent across continents in the years to come. However, it is evident that these developments impact public managers and their authorizing environments in different ways in the US, the Netherlands, China, and Kazakhstan, to name a few.

Moreover, the 'rise of China' – to name one of the most commonly observed megatrends in this century – will obviously impact public managers in different countries differently, not least those in China. Public managers in dependent emerging countries like Sri Lanka or Myanmar will be affected differently from those in competitive or even hostile countries like India or Japan, with many Western countries somewhere in between. To take another example, there is a tendency in Western democracies to criticize a strict dichotomy between politics and administration as an unproductive and static abstraction of the real world in which political and administrative roles, values, and accountability obligations increasingly blend in to each other. In developing contexts, however, the dichotomy is propagated and even enforced as a means to achieve greater autonomy for public managers.

Clearly, Miles' (1978) aphorism 'where you stand depends on where you sit' remains relevant in a globalizing world. Specific, real-life examples of common trends and their implications are provided for different regions when possible, while realizing that one book cannot cover the entire world and various chapters may be more relevant to some public managers than to others.

I am most aware of the vast socio-economic and cultural differences in status, capacity, and potential impact of public managers in different parts of the world, particularly in well-developed versus 'tough' governance settings. My fascinating experiences as an educator, researcher, and consultant in a wide variety of regions over the past number of years have only strengthened this awareness. This book includes cases and examples from different continents, but for a book like this to be relevant and live up to its promises it also needs to address the normative and empirical contrasts between administrations around the world. In short: in writing a book geared towards the 21st century public manager I realize that *the* 21st century public manager does not exist, even though I titled the book as such.