Chapter 1

YESTERDAY WHEN I WAS YOUNG[1]

R. A. W. Rhodes

Introduction

Before Bob Dylan and the explosion in the number of Anglo-Saxon singer-songwriters, the French had their *chanteurs à texte* and numbered among their post-war exemplars are Charles Aznavour, George Brassens, Jacques Brel, and Serge Gainsbourg. Their songs are avowedly poetic and often have a Gallic bitter-sweet quality. So, when a young Charles Aznavour sings of ‘the thousand dreams I dreamed, the splendid things I planned’, I think of the 1980s when, as joint editor of *Public Administration* and soon to be professor, opportunity was a vista spread before me. When an old Aznavour sorrowfully looks back and sings of ‘yesterday when I was young’, I think of the past 25 years and remember opportunities both missed and taken. My story of *Public Administration* is a story of a fall and a rise; of dashed hopes and new horizons.

This collection provides a portrait of the journal’s work over the past 25 years and acts as a sourcebook of key articles in the field. This chapter tells the story of the journal up to my appointment as editor. I then describe the ways in which the journal changed over the past 25 years. I analyse the ways in which the subject matter of the journal has changed, updating the analysis in Rhodes et al. 1995 and Dargie and Rhodes 1996. However, this analysis does not tell us anything about broader changes affecting the journal. So I discuss the effects of professionalization, corporatization, marketization, internationalization, and digitization. I then describe the articles I have selected and discuss the criteria used to choose them. Finally, I speculate on the future of the discipline and the journal.

From Royal Institute of Public Administration (RIPA) to international journal

Public Administration was the journal of the RIPA. The Institute was born in May 1922.[2] It sought to combine professional development with the work of a learned society. The first issue of the *Journal of Public Administration* was published in January 1923. It changed its name to *Public Administration* in 1926 and it was published by Oxford University Press until 1930 when the Institute became its publisher. Up to the outbreak of the Second World War, the Institute never became a staff college for the civil service as some hoped. Rather, it was 'in essence a learned society' (Nottage and Stack 1972: 302). Its journal became one of the oldest and most prestigious in any subfield of political science.

The post-war years saw a great expansion of the Institute's work and heightened status; it became the *Royal* Institute in 1954. It introduced corporate membership for local authorities, nationalized industries and health authorities, all of which improved its finances. It expanded its training courses, most notably for the UK's former colonies. Its staff increased to almost 100, and its income to over £400,000.

The RIPA's research and publications also grew. This work epitomized traditional public administration. It was institutional, analysing the history, structure, functions, powers, and relationships of government organizations (Rhodes 1991 and 1996). Perhaps the exemplars are in *The New Whitehall Series* where retired permanent secretaries described their departments: skeletons without flesh let alone life. As a novitiate, I read Newsam (1954) on the Home Office, Bridges (1964) on the Treasury, and Sharp (1969) on housing and local government. There were 15 in the series. Somehow I never got around to reading Sir Harry Melville on the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, or the other eleven in the series. Practitioners had no monopoly on turgid description. Chester and Willson's (1968 [1957]) account of *The Organization of British Central Government 1914–64* delivered boredom by the megaton. I still have my copies of these volumes. When writing this introduction, I took them off my bookshelves, probably for the last time, and smiled in fond recollection at these faded artefacts of a long gone era.

The journal was no exception to this dusty tradition. It typified the institutional tradition and a hostility to theory as it celebrated its fiftieth year. It is striking to see the differences between these articles and today's contributions. Articles were short, descriptive, historical, and concentrated on the formal-institutional aspects of government. They were often papers delivered at conferences, often organized by the RIPA. The articles had little theoretical content. They were not formally 'academic' in the sense that they had no abstract, introduction, argument, sub-headings, or conclusion. The topics were organized chronologically rather than by theme. There was little reference to the relevant academic literature. Occasionally there were footnotes which cited books and articles but there were no bibliographies. Authors did not engage with the academic literature.

Writing in 1972, its Director thought 'the Institute is better equipped than ever to take advantage of the opportunities that the times will doubtless present' (Nottage 1972: 443). Like most of us, he did not foresee the oil crisis, turbulent economic times, and the arrival of Margaret Thatcher. By 1992, the RIPA was in administrative receivership: it was broke. Its Director described 1976–89 as 'a volatile period' (Shelley 1993: 473). Shelley identifies several reasons for the RIPA's demise: the Institute overextending itself in leasing new premises; the slump in the overseas training market; auditing problems; and the cautious lending policy of the Bank. As editor of the journal, I was a bit player. I attended several executive council meetings, more as observer than participant. I spoke only on journal matters and then briefly. It seemed obvious to me the RIPA collapsed for two core reasons. It had too little capital to underpin its work and the civil service refused to provide core funding. At many points, the Cabinet Office could have intervened to save the Institute with a modest injection of capital. It chose not to do so, yet it was to spend millions in the 1990s and 2000s on the Civil Service College, the Centre for Management and Policy Studies, and the National School of Government. It seemed a wasted opportunity at the time. With 20/20 hindsight, it beggars belief.

I was a new boy among the great and good of Whitehall. My reputation was a tad 'unsound'. Christopher Pollitt encouraged me to apply for the job but, he explained, he also had to lobby for me because I was an outsider to the RIPA's world with a vocal commitment to theory and methods – guilty on both counts. [3] I was patronized. I remember Nevil Johnson, a former editor who became a member of the executive council of the RIPA, telling me how he ran the journal. I listened politely. Much as I found his Oakeshottian view of British government refreshingly eccentric, I knew we did not need a return to his editorial hand.

I was offered a six-year term as joint editor with Christopher Pollitt and, from 1988, I was sole editor. At the time, I thought six years was more than enough. Christopher reminds me regularly that I have served the longest six years of any editor he knows. He regularly warned me that I was in danger of 'going stale'. He now needs to find another conversational gambit with which to upbraid me.

Before I became editor, I thought *Public Administration* was traditional and boring. It had a clear commitment to publishing practitioners and building bridges between academics and the worlds of British central and local government. After 1964, the journal became more professionalized with academics the main contributors. The subject matter remained diverse with the case study as the dominant method. There was little or no external research funding. The journal evolved cautiously rather than in leaps and bounds, but it was beginning to change, and to become a professional academic journal with little or no practitioner involvement.

Under Michael Lee and Christopher Pollitt's guiding hands there were major changes in the design and format of the journal.[4] They introduced systematic 'double blind' refereeing, and special 'theme issues'. These trappings of professionalism became the norm. Although it was unremarked in their editorial which announced the other changes, they also included a 'statement of purpose' for the journal. Crucially, in my view, this statement announced the decision to reject 'manuscripts solely or primarily concerned with the detailed description of particular administrative practices or specific organizations' and to insist that case studies 'will be accepted only if they satisfy the two criteria of analytical rigour and a broad current interest' (Lee and Pollitt 1982: inside front cover). The statement was the death knell for the traditional article and a clear recognition of the impact of the social sciences on the subject. It was also a barrier to practitioners whose expertise lay in their detailed knowledge of administrative practices and specific organizations.

The journey to the academy had begun in earnest and I was happy to continue with these innovations. Indeed, I was sure the journal could change more with me as editor. But would I get the opportunity? I watched events at the RIPA unfold with a horror born of naked self-interest. I wanted to stay as editor because it was the top journal in my field. It now looked as if it would fold with the Institute. So, it had to be saved from the receivers, whose main concern was the value of the RIPA's assets rather than the academic integrity of its journal. Some horrendous names were broached and only the libel laws prevent me naming who might have happened to the journal. Enter Sue Corbett.

Sue Corbett was a distinguished member of the publishing profession, now retired. She was with Basil Blackwell publishers for 25 years and a member of Blackwell Publishing's management committee. Latterly, she became Managing Director of Medicine at Wiley-Blackwell. We met 'when I was a politics book editor and therefore pursuing you in the hope of getting you to write a book' (personal correspondence 12 May 2010). Like me, at the time she was a mere mortal. We kept bumping into each other because of the journal. Blackwell began to publish the journal for the RIPA from the summer of 1984 and Sue became journals' editor. She was the obvious person for me to talk to, especially as we got on; it was fun.

Sue persuaded Blackwell to buy the journal outright with me as the editor. There was only one problem. The print-run might have been some 10,000 copies but, with the demise of the RIPA, the corporate members, who accounted for most of those copies as a benefit of membership, were no more. We feared the worst, and we were right. Corporate members did not renew as individual subscribers. Almost literally, we had to start again to rebuild the subscription base. We also had to ensure a regular supply of copy. Back then, the journal was not made-up more than two issues ahead rather than the four to six of today. There could be no pretence the journal spoke to, or for, a professional public servant audience, and there was no longer a learned society. So, two of the normal sources of articles had dried up. We had to rely on academic colleagues. The journal had to survive in the fiercely competitive world of academic publishing without its practitioner membership base. It had to become a world-class *academic* journal selling to university and other libraries at home and abroad. And that is what Sue and I set out to do.

We had no magic formula but we knew the journal had to change and move beyond case studies of British government to attract a broader academic readership if we were to repair the subscription base. An editor is always a victim of the material submitted; journals get typecast. Nonetheless, editors can, slowly, influence the direction a journal takes. I broadened its scope by publishing many more theory and comparative articles. To signal our new ambitions, for the Spring 1992 issue, we adopted a new name and became *Public Administration: an international quarterly*. I sought to create an international journal and Sue rode out the financial hard times and backed my judgement.

We were willing to experiment and learn. Christopher Pollitt had introduced ‘Notes and Surveys’. This mutated into ‘Currents’ to encourage shorter practitioner pieces. In 1992, we introduced ‘Public Management’ and ‘Comparative and International Administration’. In 1999, the latter became the ‘European Forum’ (Rhodes 1999). Judging by the volume of material they attracted, both ‘Public Management’ and the ‘European Forum’ were successes. Other experiments were less successful. We tried to expand reviews to include digital, web-based material. We encouraged review articles. Academic colleagues were reluctant to write them because they were not ‘research’ and did not count, therefore, for the research audit. Most recently (Rhodes 2008), we abolished all sections. It was a tribute to the success of the ‘European Forum’ that we no longer needed a separate section to attract non-UK material.

There are various crude measures of journal success. The number of submissions increased from some 120 a year in 1986 (including RIPA conference papers, public lectures and prizes) to over 300 new manuscripts a year in 2009. The number of articles published increased from 24 to 60 a year. On average, we rejected four out of every five papers submitted and, in theory at least, we published higher quality articles. The circulation grew steadily from some 1,300 in 1990s to over 3,000 today. Despite the increase in the number of articles published, our impact factor remained firm.[5] In 2008, it increased to 1.269 and the journal was ranked sixth in the public administration category. *Public Administration* was always in the world ‘Top 10’.

A portrait: from practitioners’ reflections to academic specialization

Editors can become obsessive about their journals. I have already explored its changing subject matter from 1945–69 (Dargie and Rhodes 1996) and from 1970–94 (Rhodes et al. 1995). I might be fascinated by such exercises but I am reliably informed that they have limited appeal to normal people. So, here I summarize the changing contents of the journal only briefly, providing a broad-sweep portrait of the major changes in content rather than a detailed analysis. I focus on the 1990s and 2000s but, first, I describe where I started.

Between 1970 and 1989, the dominant contributors to the journal became academics. Practitioner contributions dropped from an average of 68 a year between 1945 and 1969 to 23 between 1970 and 1994. The subject matter of the journal remained diverse. There was one significant trend between 1970 and 1989: the growth in articles focused on public policymaking. What is rather surprising, given that it was in fashion, is that there was almost no increase in the articles about public management in the 1980s. However, in 1990, when the journal introduced its ‘Public Management’ section, the proportion of articles on public management increased from an average of eight per cent over the period from 1970 to 1989 to 32 per cent between 1990 and 1994. There was a significant change in research funding with 20 per cent of the articles based on funded research. Of the several sources, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) accounted for nearly half, and was growing. Empirical analysis in all its forms became the dominant research method, and of

Table 1: Subject Matter, 1990-2009

Subject	*1990–1994*		*1995–1999*		*2000–2004*		*2005–2009*	
	Numbers	*%*	*Numbers*	*%*	*Numbers*	*%*	*Numbers*	*%*
Traditional								
Theory	7	4.51	15	6.61	5	2.4	24	10.13
Public management	50	32.3	36	15.9	38	18.27	24	10.13
Participation	1	0.65	8	3.52	2	0.96	4	1.69
Public policymaking and planning	20	12.9	14	6.17	9	4.32	4	1.69
Accountability	1	0.65	12	5.29	6	2.88	6	2.53
Personnel	2	1.29	4	1.76	0	0	2	0.84
Budgeting	3	1.94	15	6.61	5	2.4	3	1.27
Intergovernmental relations	4	2.6	12	5.29	2	0.96	2	0.84
Local government and other subcentral bodies	15	9.68	28	12.3	24	11.54	24	10.13
Central government	17	11	6	2.64	7	3.37	10	4.22
Law	0	0	3	1.32	3	1.42	3	1.27
Sub-total	**120**	**77.4**	**153**	**67.4**	**101**	**48.56**	**106**	**44.72**
Inter-national and comparative								
EU	3	1.94	11	4.84	19	9.13	19	8.01
Western Europe	11	7.1	25	11	43	20.7	58	24.47
Eastern Europe	0	0	3	1.32	1	0.48	2	0.84
USA	1	0.65	5	2.2	7	3.37	10	4.22
Australasia	0	0	9	3.96	10	4.81	13	5.49
Other	20	12.9	1	0.44	5	2.4	5	2.1
Sub-total	**35**	**22.6**	**54**	**23.8**	**85**	**40.87**	**107**	**45.15**
New								
Policy networks and governance	0	0	20	8.81	22	10.58	24	10.13
Sub-total	**0**	**0**	**20**	**8.81**	**22**	**10.58**	**24**	**10.13**
TOTAL	**155**	**100**	**227**	**100**	**208**	**100**	**237**	**100**

the several empirical methods employed, the case study was the most important. Finally, there was an increase in the theoretical content of articles. Although the number of theoretical articles remained constant at some 4–6 per cent, as Dunsire (1995: 33) observes, ‘most contributors to a journal such as this [*Public Administration*], including practitioners, are aware of theoretical writings on their topics’. Case studies were now topped and tailed with theory. The overall picture is that of a subject developing a stronger theoretical and empirical character by the mid-1990s.

In the 1990s and the 2000s, much remained the same. Contributors remained overwhelmingly academic. In the 2000s, 94 per cent of the contributors were academics. Most articles had no research funding but of those that did, nearly all were funded by the ESRC. From 1990 to 2004, public management was the largest single category, although it tailed off in the late 2000s. Traditional public administration pottered along. Although some classical topics, such as administrative law, almost disappeared, others aged well. Local government and the national health services continued to attract much scholarly attention. Some topics, such as accountability, staged a mini-comeback. The contents remained diverse. The journal published articles on policy areas new to its pages (for example, sport, the police). However, there are three standout changes: theory, comparative public administration, and policy networks and governance. Theoretical articles became much more common, rising steadily to 10 per cent. The increase in comparative material from some 23 per cent to 45 per cent was gratifying but expected: it was editorial policy. The increase in the articles on networks, inter-organizational analysis and governance was not an editorial decision. It reflected changing academic interests. It was a rapid increase within the period. From nothing in the early 1990s, the number of articles increased to some 10 per cent throughout the 2000s. I sought to reflect the changing contents of the journal in my selection of articles for this collection (see below).

What has changed?

A content analysis of the journal tells us about the changing intellectual interests of the journal's contributors. There were also some broader changes affecting the journal; professionalization, corporatization, marketization, internationalization, and digitization.

Professionalization

The most obvious effects of professionalization are the greater attention paid to theory and methods. An attendant outcome is specialization. Younger colleagues cut their teeth on specific topics. I intend no criticism. I did the same; my early research interest of intergovernmental relations was nothing if not specialized. Such specialization has long been a feature of a discipline that is technical and professional, rather than theoretical, and concerned with practical problems and their solutions. So, we master such subjects as human resource management, performance measurement, and budgeting within the micro-world of a local authority, a regional agency, or a non-governmental public body. It is a characteristic of professionalization. Specialization will become a problem, however, if it drives out an interest in broader issues such as the changing nature of the state or the role of bureaucracy in the post-bureaucratic era. The discursive essay is becoming a rarity, all the more welcome for its scarcity.

The research environment also changed. Young academics were trained to write academic articles for professional journals. The role model was American political science. So, they 'engaged with the literature', explained their methods, set out their research question and hypotheses, marshalled their data, and, even in the UK, employed statistical and deductive reasoning. They expected referees' reports. The commissioned piece was even rarer. The piece based on a practitioner's reflections was nigh extinct.

Corporatization

Increasingly academics worked in a 'publish or perish' environment brought on by the audit explosion that engulfed the public sector, not just universities. The year of 1986 saw the British government's first research assessment exercise (RAE), measuring the quality of academic research. Equivalent assessments followed roughly every five years. There were major consequences for the journal.

Departments shed their so-called 'tails' of colleagues who did not publish. More people wrote more articles on more and more specialized topics. Over the next two decades, refereed articles in international journals became the yardstick of excellence. *Public Administration* thrived, whether the measure is submission rate, circulation, or the impact factor. The effects were most pronounced in the two years before the RAE, when submissions escalated. There was a tailing off immediately after an RAE, so aspiring contributors take heed!

Marketization

Professionalization also affected marketing. In my first decade as editor, I paid no more than passing attention to the 'impact factors' produced by Thomson ISI (Institute for Scientific Information). This measure is flawed for the social sciences, yet it is reported on the journal's website and every year I discuss with the publishers what we will do to improve the impact factor. All major publishers produce guides to improving your impact factor. For example, publishers devise strategies for 'optimizing citations':

- Court high impact academics and convince them to publish with you.
- Publish your best papers early in the year to make the most of the citation ‘window’.
- Network wherever you can. Personal bonds can play a significant role in submissions.
- Ensure that your review process works efficiently and that turnaround times are short.
- Commission review and survey articles because they can attract up to twice as many citations as research papers in the same subject.
- Avoid short communications which count as research papers but attract few citations.
- Collect papers into thematic sets as either special issues or symposia in standard journal issues.
- Make your best papers available free on-line.

There are also ‘cynical strategies’ which, of course, no publisher would recommend and no editor would employ.

- Encourage authors to cite previous papers from your journal.
- Add highly cited articles in your journal to the list of references of papers under review.
- Agree mutual citation pacts with the editors of other journals in the same area.

Market considerations are not a UK phenomenon. Impact factors are ubiquitous. The Australian equivalent of the RAE is the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) Initiative. It is run by the Australian Research Council, which ranked journals A*, A, B or C depending on quality. A key predictor of that ranking was a journal's impact factor. There are no sour grapes here. The ERA ranked *Public Administration* A* (the top rank).[6] My aim is simply to describe the world journal editors live in, and to note the close relationship between professionalization and marketing. Of course, publishers pay attention to impact factors. They would be foolish not to.

Internationalization

The major change for *Public Administration* was its advance into Continental Europe. In 1986, the journal was the premier outlet for British public administration research. Now, it is an international journal, and we added 'an international quarterly' to its title to signal this change. Most of its content was from academics not based in the UK and about countries other than the UK. Credit must be given to Walter Kickert who did sterling work developing the 'European Forum'. *Public Administration* is no longer solely or even mainly a UK journal.

Internationalization will be fostered by the twin trends of diversification and specialization because they open opportunities for authors from many countries and disciplines. Public administration has ever broadening boundaries. In 1986, we may have published papers on public management but, with the coming of the new public management, there was a large increase in interest. The journal's terms of reference now cover public management and public policy. Moreover, even these broad areas are broadly conceived. It remains editorial policy to turn down case studies that do not address a theoretical or public policy issue of wide interest. We do not turn down any article because of its disciplinary or country origins.

Further internationalization is inevitable. The journal has barely touched the huge Asian market, notably China. In 2009, we appointed the first Asian members of the Editorial Board. Our first Asian special issue will be published in 2012. Chinese authors already submit regularly to the journal. They can struggle with the Western rules of the game. Their rejection rate is high. Many Chinese scholars, however, are now trained in the USA, with PhDs from the best schools. The competitive advantage of the West will not last.

Digitization

Digitization was the key to the rebirth of *Public Administration* and it will be at the heart of its future academic and commercial success. Publishers now sell electronic access to bundles of journals. It is possibly the major marketing innovation of the 2000s.

We are all familiar with some degree of digitization. *Public Administration* introduced its on-line manuscript management system in 2003. So, authors submit on-line and the editor's decision and the referees' reports are sent electronically. I used to have a journal secretary who wrote to authors on headed paper. Now I am my own secretary working through a website in the USA. The offprint is gone. We now get the pdf. Articles still appear in hard copy but, thanks to *EarlyView*, the electronic version appears months before. I used to go the library to browse the journals section. Now I get my e-mail announcement and download any article I want to my laptop. It is but the beginning. Digitization already means that I rarely look at the hard copy of any journal including the one I edited. Soon, the hard copy will only be printed on demand. Warehouse and distribution costs will be a thing of the past. What price a 'Kindle' ™ for journals?

The chapters

Over the past 25 years *Public Administration* has pioneered new approaches and published many leading articles. I could not possibly 'represent' the scope and coverage of the journal in 12 articles selected from the hundreds available. I don't try. Instead, I paint a personal picture of the journal and the selection reflects editorial policy and my interests. However, I looked for some 'objective' criteria both to support my preferences and to act as a counterweight to possible errors of judgement. There were two obvious starting points: citations, and the analysis of the journal's contents (above).

I know citation league tables can exert a perverse influence. For example, deans and other university managers use them to set inappropriate targets for 'staff' – are we still their colleagues? Nonetheless, we scour such rankings when they are published; they are often a source of malicious fun. Whether it is the ranking of universities or disciplines, we view them as confirmation of our relative standing. So, my first cut was a list of the most cited articles since 1986. There are several weaknesses with using citations. The longer an article has been published, the greater the number of citations. So, I also compiled a list of articles with the most citations in the 2000s, enabling me to balance old and new material. However, few articles published before 1990 are ever cited and none before 1986 made the top 100, yet I wanted some material from the earlier years. Also, five authors accounted for one-third of all citations. I decided no author would have more than one article. That way the reader will hear more authorial voices. At best, the citations provide only a rough guide to the relative standing of articles. They did not determine the final selection.

I also wanted my selection to illustrate the changing contents of the journal. The content analysis suggests the main foci of the journal became theory, comparison, and public management. I use these broad categories to organize the book. So, Part 1 comprises theoretical articles from the ‘Main articles’ section, Part 2 contains comparative material from the ‘European Forum’, and Part 3 draws its material from the ‘Public Management’ section. That said, articles in the comparative section attracted fewer citations than articles in the rest of the journal. So, for this section, I had to exercise editorial privilege. For example, I always encouraged articles from Commonwealth countries and I insisted that the Commonwealth be present here. I also asked my European Editor, Walter Kickert, to nominate his favourite articles.

There was a particular problem when choosing the public management articles for this book. Articles about the practice of public administration are commonly about issues of the day and take the form of a case study in a particular country. Unfortunately, today’s problems rapidly become tomorrow’s antiquities and nobody cares any more. Even worse, the preoccupations of one country are not shared elsewhere. So, in Part 3, I sought articles that addressed general issues of concern to practitioners which, I hope, will not date too quickly and are not specific to the UK.

I was also keen for the journal to be an outlet for new approaches in public administration. Looking back over 25 years, it seems odd to describe the new public management, policy networks, and governance as ‘new’: they are now so well-established. In 1986, they were not new: they were unknown. As the content analysis reveals, they are now an important and growing subset of articles in the journal.

Finally, this collection is more than a compilation of significant articles. It has a unique feature – the authorial afterword. Any article published in the 1990s, let alone the 1980s, will begin to show signs of wear and tear. So, everyone contributes an afterword of some

1,000 words reflecting on what they got right, and what they got wrong, and the continuing relevance of their findings.[7]

Part 1 focuses on theory and, in Chapter 2, Colin Hay reflects on the status of rational choice in public administration. In the USA, rational choice theory is probably the most influential approach in the study of politics. It is less influential in the UK and Continental Europe, but it is body of theory with which public administration scholars need to engage, if only to expound and clarify their own theoretical position. As the 'Afterword' emphasizes, Colin invites us to reflect on the meaning of rationality beyond the narrow confines of utility-maximizing behaviour and on the implications of assuming politicians and bureaucrats act only in their narrow, instrumental self-interest. His argument that rational choice should be seen as a heuristic analytical strategy, not an explanatory, predictive, theory, remains important and salient today. Colin Hay's article was an obvious choice because it was a winner of the United Kingdom Public Administration Consortium (UKPAC) Prize for the best article of the year.

As the previous section shows, the study of networks and governance was a distinct and distinctive development in both the study of public administration and the pages of the journal. At its heart were two research programmes funded by the ESRC: on local governance, and on Whitehall. Chapter 3 by R. A. W. Rhodes surveys the findings of the Whitehall Programme and provides a summary of the first-wave theories of network governance. It tells the distinctive story of fragmentation, networks, unintended consequences and diplomacy in British government and challenges the managerial story of recent changes. The 'Afterword' reflects briefly on the limits of the first-wave and briefly outlines the successive waves of governance theory; on metagovernance, and decentred governance.

Chapter 3 offers a broad survey of network governance and its application to British government. Chapter 4 unpacks the idea by exploring multi-organizational partnerships in urban regeneration. Vivien Lowndes and Chris Skelcher identify a four-stage life cycle: pre-partnership collaboration, partnership creation, partnership programme delivery and partnership termination. They argue for separating such organizational forms from the modes of governance of networks, market and hierarchy to better manage the conflicts between them. As their 'Afterword' makes clear, partnerships are now institutionalized in UK public management and the research agenda has moved on to explore the mix of modes of governance and the role of individual actors in managing the mix.

Even editors can be surprised by the contents of their journal. I planned for and got more articles on public policy and public management. I did not expect the classical topics of traditional public administration to revive. Chapter 5 on accountability is a good example of revival. Richard Mulgan wrote a fine book on the topic: *Holding power to account: accountability in modern democracies* (2003). His chapter rehearses many of the themes developed in that book, especially the argument that expanding the idea of accountability weakens its core idea of external scrutiny. As he stresses in his 'Afterword', the 'obligation of officials to answer to those they serve and to face sanctions from them' is a 'vital safeguard'. Whatever nuances, emphases or qualifications one might want to enter today, the core argument remains valid ten years later and explains why it is one of the more highly cited articles of the 2000s.

Part 2 comprises articles on comparative public administration. Chapter 6 is a genuinely comparative article, not a case study, of cabinet government in Westminster systems. Pat Weller points to the nigh endless confusions in the debate about cabinet government and identifies four meanings of the term: as the constitutional theory of ministerial and collective responsibility, as a set of rules and routines, as the forum for policymaking and coordination, as a political bargaining arena between central actors, and as a component of the core executive. Somewhat depressingly, in his ‘Afterword’, he concludes ‘nothing has changed’. Examples abound whether it is the confusions of the House of Lords Select Committee on the Constitution’s (2010) recent analysis of the Cabinet Office or the UK coalition government’s view that collective responsibility still applies, except when it does not!

Fritz Scharpf’s account of the joint decision trap in European Union (EU) policy making in Chapter 7 is one of the classic articles of European public administration. He takes the idea of ‘*politikverflechtung*’ in German federalism – an idea he pioneered – and applies it to EU policy making. He points out that in both cases the affected governments participate in central decisions and the *de facto* requirement of unanimous decisions systematically generates sub-optimal policy. The result is, in Scharpf’s neatly phrased paradox, ‘frustration without disintegration and resilience without progress’. As he argues in his ‘Afterword’, this ‘joint decision trap’ is not the only mode of governance available in theory or practice, but it stands out because it has the potential for effective European solutions with some opportunities for democratic self-determination.

In Chapter 8, Erik-Hans Klijn, Joop Koppenjan and Katrien Termeer show that when case studies are linked with theory they can produce findings of general relevance. The case study is of renovating post-war housing in Groningen, the Netherlands. The theory is network theory. The outcome is a series of recommendations about creating win–win games, investing resources, limiting interaction costs, mobilizing commitment, political-administrative management, and open interaction. The article was one of the first to explore network management as part of the toolkit of government. As their ‘Afterword’ makes clear, the literature on network management has blossomed over the past 15 years. Subsequently, the authors wrote two important books on managing networks (Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan 1997; Koppenjan and Klijn 2004). For most readers, however, this is where it started. It attracts many citations, and it was nominated by the European editor as one of his favourite pieces from the 'European Forum'.

For Chapter 9, there is a personal tale. I am not sure that Jean-Claude Thoenig and I have ever had a face-to-face academic discussion. Our encounters have been fleeting, at official functions and the like; but early on in my career, his work with Michel Crozier on French public and territorial administration exercised an important influence on my work on British central–local relations (Crozier and Thoenig 1976). I do not even know if he is aware of his influence! However, when Walter Kickert acquired his article for the journal, I was delighted to renew our author–reader relationship. I was fascinated. The 1976 analysis had stood the test of time. French territorial administration was still polycentric, characterized by its honeycomb pattern of relations, the accumulation of political mandates, the cross-regulation of political and administration hierarchies, and centrifugal forces undermining state authority. When he describes the model as 'robust' in his 'Afterword', it is hard to disagree.

Part 3 focuses on public management. It is hard to find anything new to say about Chapter 10 by Christopher Hood on the new public management (NPM). It attracts massive citations and it is probably impossible to write on the topic without including it in the references. However, there is a story about it coming to *Public Administration.* In 1985, the Government and Law Committee of the ESRC funded a three-year research initiative on current changes in the system of government, with Nevil Johnson as its guiding hand. I asked Nevil to edit a special issue on the programme but he said 'No'. I was puzzled. I was not sure why he did not want to draw attention to the findings of his programme. Perhaps editing the journal for a decade was enough for him. Anyway, I ignored him, and approached the several researchers on the programme personally, including Christopher Hood. They all thought it was a splendid idea and the journal published a special issue on *The new public management* (Volume 69 Number 1 1999). Since then, Christopher's article has made a major contribution to the journal's impact factor all by itself. As Christopher's 'Afterword' notes, it can be cited for the wrong reasons. He was not an advocate of NPM but a sceptical commentator. The research programme may be forgotten but his article is not and, if the fashion for NPM has subsided, many of its ideas and practices have become part of the mainstream.

The network literature now occurs in many guises from arcane theory to practical manuals. There is a large and growing literature on managing networks and this topic has expanded to encompass such topics as interorganizational analysis, collaboration, partnerships, and even coordination. It tends to focus on macro and structural factors in examining networks. From my youth at the Institute of Local Government Studies (INLOGOV), University of Birmingham, I remembered the work of John Friend on the idea of the 'reticulist' or 'network former' who activates decision networks (Friend, Power and Yewlett 1974: xxvii, 185, and 364–7). Chapter 11 by Paul Williams also looks at the individuals who manage the links between organizations – boundary spanners – and the ways in which they manage complexity and interdependence. He seeks to put the people back into networks and to reorientate the field. As his 'Afterword' suggests, now the challenge is to go into the field and watch boundary spanners 'in action'. The topic is as important, and neglected, today as it was when Williams wrote his article.

John Stewart was my boss at INLOGOV in my first lecturing job. Michael Clarke was the Director of the Local Government Training Board and one of John's regular co-authors. It is John Stewart I know best because he was an inspiration to this novitiate. He had a knack for communicating. He could hold an audience of local government officers under his spell even when they were sceptical. His work of corporate management and planning in local government commanded much attention among academics and practitioners alike in the 1970s. As I watched, it did not seem possible that, like him, I could write widely-read books or command large audiences. I was not then, nor am I now, an advocate of his brand, or any other brand, of managerialism. However, Chapter 12 on the public service orientation is a remarkably prescient piece of work. Two decades later, the label may have gone but the basic ideas about service delivery and citizen choice and voice are at the heart of the managerial agenda for the 2000s. They were barely on the horizon when this chapter was written. Moreover, many of the issues it identifies remain to dog the service delivery agenda. The authors' 'Afterword' is slightly apologetic about their use of language and for underestimating the extent of change needed; maybe, but being first excuses a lot.

Sir Richard Wilson, now Lord Wilson of Dinton, was Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service. Just before he retired, Sir Richard delivered a lecture on what had changed since his predecessor, Lord Bridges, wrote his *Portrait of a profession* in 1950. Chapter 13 is one of the few pieces the journal published by a serving civil servant since 1992. I knew Sir Richard because he helped me with the ESRC's Whitehall Programme, smoothing access to central government departments. I was daunted by the demands the job made on him. I was impressed by his enthusiasm and willingness to look after an academic who simply could not have been a priority. I suspect his civility is a long-standing virtue of mandarins and his lecture is a tribute not only to the capacity of the civil service to respond to its political masters but also to its traditions and their ability to endure.

As Lord Wilson emphasizes in the ‘Afterword’, too often, the role of the civil service as a ‘shock absorber’ is undervalued. Coping is not a history-making activity but it is essential for all that (Rhodes 2011). It seems fitting that my picture of a journal that grew out of the ashes of the RIPA should end with the voice of a civil servant for whom, as for Lord Bridges, the learned society would have been a natural outlet for his thoughts.

Conclusions: where to next?

In the early 1990s, I was pessimistic about the fate of the discipline in Britain in the 1980s (Rhodes 1991 and 1996) because of the impact of managerialism, the demise of the RIPA, and dependence on government funding. Hood (1999) compared this dodo or pessimistic view of the discipline with the phoenix or progressive view which stresses growing intellectual rigour and professionalization. He itemized the advent of organizational analysis, policy analysis and a new generation of social science scholars. Hood demurred from judgements of decline or progress, however, inclining to a chameleon perspective that stresses an evolutionary view of the subject and its mainstreaming within political science. Boyne (1996) is also unsympathetic to the decline thesis, welcoming the shift to the new public management paradigm. In the 1980s, it was appropriate for the editor of the RIPA’s *Public Administration* journal to reflect on the state of *British* (and perhaps Commonwealth) public administration. In 2010, such parochialism will not do. Instead, I must reflect on the state of *European* public administration; on its distinctive characteristics and on whether it is declining or prospering.

The discipline of public administration has shared problems no matter where it is studied. Mackenzie (1970: chapter 2) defines disciplines not by their subject matter, methods or agreed paradigm but as social entities with shared traditions and supported by organizational forms such as departments or faculties in universities. In this sense, public administration was, and remains, a discipline. However, there can be no pretence to a disciplinary core. The first characteristic of the discipline is its profusion of contending theories and plurality of methods in both America and Europe. This shift from order to chaos, from traditional public administration to a range of contending approaches, has been noted so often, it does not require further elaboration here (see for example, Henry 1999, Hood 1999, Lundquist 1985, Rhodes 1991).

Second, its traditional subject matter of the history, structure, functions, powers and relationships of government organizations is also the happy hunting ground of many other disciplines. So, public administration competes for attention with economics departments and business schools among others. Many of the fears expressed about the future of public administration were about its disciplinary standing. The subject matter attracted ever more attention and was never in danger of disappearing from academic agendas.

Third, public administration is a practical subject, perhaps even a profession, which seeks to provide timely advice and train practitioners. It receives much financial support from government both in research grants, consultancies and other applied work. There are two ever-present dilemmas here. Academic fame and fortune lies in developing theory, in publication in international refereed journals, and standing with one’s colleagues. The discipline survives, even thrives, in the 2000s because some of its leading players mastered the ‘trick’ of linking policy and academic relevance. It has a cadre of senior academics engaging with one another’s work. We may specialize in central–local relationships, public service delivery or other topics of the day, but we locate such topics in the broader agendas of the social and human sciences. Yet the more successful we are in bridging theory and practice, the greater our dependence on government research support. We become too sensitive to the state's research agendas, courting the danger of becoming a slave social science of either mere technicians or loyal servants of power or, of course, both (Donovan 2005). Conversely, the more we seek to meet the academic criteria and focus on (say) theory, the less interesting our work to practitioners and the less inclined they are to fund research.

Fourth, public administration is all too often parochial, none more so than the world leader in the field, American public administration. As Kickert (1997: 28) points out, American public administration occupies a 'dominant position in the professional field' yet it is 'exceptionally unique'; for example, it has no state tradition. The point about American parochialism is often conceded (Heady 2001, Stillman 1997). Indeed, Richard Stillman (2010), the editor of *Public Administration Review* (PAR), argues that the mission of his journal is to 'promulgate generalist administrative ideas' to forge a 'corporate identity of like-minded generalist professionals'. That mission is specific to a country with no such cadre of state officials. He talks as though American practitioners are the only relevant audience, since PAR is a local professional journal. On the other hand, European public administration is shaped by several distinct state traditions: for example, the consociational, Napoleonic, and *rechtsstaat* traditions (see (Dyson 1980, Kickert 2007). We can pride ourselves that we have a plurality of parochialisms to go with our many theories and eclectic methods!

Finally, this parochialism sustains some distinctive research agendas. I give two examples: something old and something new. Most countries have a juridical tradition not found in America or Britain whether it is the French *droit adminstratif* or the German *rechtsstaat*. There is also the recent explosion of work on networks and governance It has had four main expressions: the 'Anglo-governance school' in the UK

(Marinetto 2003, Rhodes 1997 and 2007), *steuerungtheorie* in Germany (Mayntz 1993 and 2003, Scharpf 1997), network management in The Netherlands (Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan 1997, Koppenjan and Klein 2004), and a normative literature that raises the question of whether networks and governance increase participation (Sørensen and Torfing 2005).

These local traditions vie with the mighty American presence in the field. The size and prestige of the American profession mean that if American scholars develop a new intellectual fashion, it almost invariably becomes everybody else's fad. I consider such intellectual trends as reinventing government and public value as agendas heavily conditioned by their American constitutional and political context. They travel poorly, and probably should not travel at all (Rhodes and Wanna 2009), yet still they attract often uncritical disciples. The problem is compounded by the reluctance of American public administration to engage with the rest of the world. When the American's 'discovered' policy networks, they displayed limited awareness of the four schools of network governance in European public administration.

The consequences for *Public Administration* are unfortunate. American scholars offer little of their work to non-US journals, and the work they do offer is often too narrow for an international readership. To be blunt, we do not get their best work. We conspire to support American parochialism. We rank their journals as 'international' when the overwhelming proportion of that journal content is by Americans for Americans on America (Sharman and Weller 2009). So, America remains the Dark Continent for European public administration. The question is whether we should bother to adventure there as either editors or authors? Of course we will, and we should engage with interesting ideas and practices wherever we may find them, but the future does not lie in American parochialism. Rather, the future lies in developing our own parochialisms.

European public administration no longer has an agreed theoretical core. It grapples with but does not resolve the divide between pure and applied research. It is parochial, and challenged by American traditions of study. Yet it is a thriving area of research with a cadre of distinguished professors with distinctive research agendas. The journal has increasingly mirrored the diversity of the subject, and I hope it will continue to do so. Colleagues will continue to bemoan the lack of a disciplinary core or our failure to engage with practitioners. Others will extol the virtues of the latest American intellectual fashion, and rail against European parochialism. I hope all of this comes to pass and the analysis and debate takes place in the pages of the journal. We may have moved from order to chaos but for the journal that translates into diversity and controversy; into a prospering discipline. What fun! [8]

Envoi

I empathize with Charles Aznavour’s sadness when he sings ‘there are so many songs in me that won’t be sung’, but I do not have his Gallic cast of mind. Late in his career Bob Dylan gave us a trio of CDs to rank with his best – ‘Time Out of Mind’, ‘Love and Theft’, and ‘Modern Times’. So, I have more songs to sing and as Dylan reminds us, ‘it’s not dark yet’ even if ‘it’s getting there’.

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Notes

[1] I would like to thank Eilidh St John for research assistance and Sue Corbett, Jenny Fleming, Christopher Pollitt, and Pat Weller for commenting on the first draft.

[2] This brief history of the RIPA is drawn from Nottage and Stack 1972; Nottage 1972; and Shelley 1993.

[3] The post-war editors of the journal were D. N. Chester (1946–66); Nevil Johnson (1966–81); Michael Lee (1981–6); Christopher Pollitt (1981–8); and R. A. W. Rhodes (1986–2011).

[4] All editors incur massive debts with their editorial team, editorial board and journal referees. After 25 years, it is just not possible to thank everyone by name but I would not like anyone to think I am ungrateful for their sterling support. There are the few who served beyond the call of duty. I mourn the passing of my 'Public Management' and latterly 'Reviews Editor', Bill Jenkins. He joined me in 1992 and we worked together for 17 years. Jean Frostick and Sally Crawford were magnificent journal managers and, best of all, fun colleagues. Walter Kickert's work in building the 'European Forum' was integral to the journal's success.

[5] The impact factor is calculated by dividing citations in the past two years by the total number of articles. So, the more articles you publish, the harder it is to maintain your impact factor, given that only a minority of articles ever attract significant attention.

[6] See: *www.arc.gov.au/era/era_journal_list.htm*; and Rhodes and Hamilton 2007. Both last accessed 31 May 2010.

[7] The authors have not changed their original texts and we have only edited the chapters for obvious spelling and other mistakes and to ensure a uniform design and layout.

[8] If European public administration prospers in its diversity, I must enter a qualification about British public administration. Its position is more precarious. It is a small discipline compared to The Netherlands let alone Germany, reliant on government especially research council support, with only a small postgraduate recruitment with which to replace

its grand old men and women. In the era of the global financial crisis, it is vulnerable to changing government policy and legislative agendas and cuts in public expenditure (see Hood 2011).