

Editorial

Public administration has been greatly impacted by ongoing debates surrounding the notion of an “identity crisis” in recent years. The debates have centered around determining what the object of study is and/or ought to be. Considering public administration as a separate discipline has played a crucial role in shaping the ongoing debates and the epistemological inquiries surrounding it. These questions have had an impact as well on how undergraduate and graduate programs in the discipline have been designed and operated.

Additionally, we can establish a connection between this discussion agenda and the fundamental problem of discipline, tracing it back to the origins of public administration as a distinct discipline. Yet, if we examine the escalating discussions from the 1980s and 1990s, it becomes evident that the agenda and intensity of these discussions are inseparable from their historical backdrop. The continuous nature of the discussions can be attributed to the influence of neoliberalism and the conviction in the “end of history” that emerged in the 1990s. Since neoliberal management forms were seen as the epitome of human achievement through the “end of history” metaphor, this belief led to doubts about the need to generate knowledge about administrative reality.

Today, prominent public administration journals like *Public Administration and Development*, *Public Administration Review*, and *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Administration* emphasize the significance of public administration and the priority of research in this domain. The context, content, and trajectory of the discussions have been swiftly changing. As Nuray Ertürk Keskin points out in her comment article titled “Why is Public Administration Important?” in this issue, we observe that Francis Fukuyama, who had declared the “end of history”, has once again stimulated these discussions with his two articles. It might be inferred that Fukuyama discerns, as he did in the 1990s, there is a global shift in administrative reality that will have significant consequences in both practical and theoretical domains today. Similarly, influential figures in the field are focusing on the political, economic, and social factors that have led to deviations from

democratic principles across the globe, with particular attention to the United States of America, and highlighting the administrative capacity to address this democratic deficit.

Publicus notices the rapid shifts in context, content, and trajectory of the discussions. Public administration is now being recognized as a central topic of discussion. In contrast to the previous discussions that underscored the methodological weaknesses of public administration, *Publicus* recognizes these discussions aim to place emphasis on the variety of research and methodologies that were explored in public administration. Since its inception, *Publicus* has aspired to lead its readers in witnessing this phenomenon. We acknowledge the influence of global trends on administrative realities, whether at the local, regional, or national scale. However, *Publicus* wants more than just witnessing this transformation; it longs to be involved in these discussions. With this in mind, the goal is to center on the historical context that drives the discussions and the ontological change in the domain of governance. The journal emphasizes the importance of research by acknowledging that original contributions to the field stem from addressing this change with unique research questions and areas of study. *Publicus'* objective is to grasp not only administrative frameworks and participants, but also to concentrate on the processes of the organization of social relations that explicitly showcase these frameworks and participants. Regarding the ongoing democratic crisis which stems from the fact that both democracy and the state are deprived of "public", our aim is to focus research on the "public" in the act of governing, as indicated by the journal's name.

In its debut publication, *Publicus* recognizes the shifting context and content of discussions in the realm of public administration. Jos C. N. Raadschelders, a prominent figure in the field, authored the first article titled "The Future of Government and its Study of Public Administration: Accountability for Democracy" based on the keynote speech delivered at the International Public Administration Congress organized by the Public Administration Association on October 26-27, 2023. Raadschelders, as in his other academic works, goes beyond restricting government to specific time periods, administrative structures, and evaluation processes. He underlines the significance of concentrating on government itself, explaining that our institutional

arrangements are founded on the ways in which we govern and are governed. By examining the concept of democratic government in comparison to other forms of government, Raadschelders underscores the need to understand why it has become increasingly vulnerable in contemporary times. Raadschelders specifically highlights accountability as a significant factor among the reasons. According to him, the way people are placed and the roles they have in society play a significant role in determining government, while the accountability of government, both at an individual and institutional level, influences how government is perceived by the people. Thus, he argues for the importance of placing emphasis on accountability when measuring and evaluating democratic government.

In this issue, the second comment article explores the importance of public administration. The author of the article, Nuray Ertürk Keskin, argues that “The well-being and happiness of societies are closely connected to the kind of governance they have”, and says that “Every disaster we experience or are forced to watch from afar continues to bring the question ‘is it possible to govern differently?’ to the agenda, which is why public administration is important.” With the presence of income inequality that escalates poverty rates, the disappearance of equal opportunities, authoritarianism, the erosion of democratic values, migration movements, pandemics, climate change, famine, food crises, the impact of artificial intelligence development, and increasing uncertainties, she emphasizes the heightened importance of public administration in today’s world. She underlines the significance of public administration education and research, proposing a framework for their advancement based on an analysis of the current landscape in Türkiye.

xx

After reading these two crucial comment articles on government and public administration, you will find five research articles. Three articles specifically address governing the field of agriculture. *Publicus* chooses not to begin its publication journey with a topic that could go viral on social media or generate widespread sales. Instead, it features three agricultural articles that provide concrete insights into a topic that has a tangible presence in our daily lives and is consistently on our agenda, with each article categorized under a separate heading. If we were living in the 1920s or 1950s, when agriculture was the backbone of

Türkiye's economy, working in this sector might have been highly sought after. According to 2022 data, the industrial and service sectors have surpassed the agricultural sector in terms of employment and economic significance. However, it is not only our country but the entire world that feels the greatest impact of economic crises, especially when it comes to our tables. The picture today is largely shaped by agriculture, which has undergone significant changes due to neoliberal policies over the last forty years. Consequently, our intention was to underscore the importance of agriculture by featuring research articles on governing the agricultural field in the opening of our journal.

Cuma Yıldırım's article, "Evaluating the Agricultural Cooperation Agreement between Türkiye and Sudan in the Framework of Policy Success," examines the impact of neoliberal policies on agriculture and highlights the importance of transnational agricultural governance. Based on the analysis of the bilateral agricultural agreement that Turkey signed with Sudan in 2014, Yıldırım argues that land grabbing became a common practice for countries seeking to secure food, following the 2007-2008 world food price crisis, and evaluates the policy success of this transnational agricultural policy.

xxi

The second article is Burhan Özalp's "The Role of the State in the Commodification of Agriculture: Agriculture in Turkey" investigates historical and current statistical data to understand the role of state via its agricultural policies throughout the history of the Republic, and its effects on the agricultural practices. Özalp argues that the state has played a crucial role in the commodification and market integration of the agricultural production during both interventionist period and neoliberal times, with qualitatively addressing different policy tools that were used and outcomes that have emerged.

Güler Ünlü's article, "The Geopolitics of Grain: Russia, War and a New Order," delves into the topics of grain production, financing, and distribution, which make up approximately 30-35% of agricultural production on a global scale. The article suggests that the importance of grain in financial markets has grown as the grain sector became more integrated with the market after the 2007-2008 food crisis. The main argument of the article is that the Russia-Ukraine War, which commenced in 2022, could bring about a shift in the dominant

paradigm in global markets. Ünlü also argues a shift from global to regional is occurring, with increased protectionism and a resurgence of public intervention in economic policies.

The remaining two research articles in this issue of *Publicus* exemplify the extensive reach of public administration and the need for the field of study to broaden its scope by exploring diverse topics. In her article, Şeyma Sağdıç Güven explores the growing prominence of foundations in the field of public administration in Türkiye, as discussed in "The Less State The More Waqfs: A Way of Privatization." Güven discusses how foundations now function as part of public organizations and use public assets for their activities, demonstrating their contribute to the privatization of public assets. Müge Neda Altınoklu's article, "An Alternative Perspective on the Nature of Chambers and Unions," examines professional organizations that fall under the category of public institutions. She closely examines TOBB and TESK, which represent tradesmen and trade chambers and unions, proposing that these public organizations should be evaluated as public institutions institutionalized around different professional and class interests, taking into account their activity areas and dynamics of capital accumulation.

This issue includes two book reviews and two event reports. Recognizing the importance of books in public administration research and education, it aims to introduce researchers and educators to new resources and highlight influential works. *Publicus* features in this issue book reviews of Markus Miessen's "The Nightmare of Participation", which resonates since it was published in 2010 and Élise Massicard's "Street-Level Governing Negotiating the State in Urban Turkey," which was published in French in 2018 and translated into Turkish in 2023. The first review is written by Ezgi Seçkiner Bingöl, and the second one by Şulener Özkan Erdoğan. Besides, the event reports aim to shed light on recent events held in the field of public administration. Serhat Saatçi evaluates the International Public Administration Congress on "What Kind of Public Administration in the Wake of the 100th Anniversary of the Turkish Republic?" held by the Public Administration Association on October 26-27, 2023. Şeyma Eşki Çaylak discusses the roundtable meeting on "Island as an Administrative Unit" held on February 28, 2024, by the Adadayız project executors including Galimi Çınarlı Rural

Development and Tourism Association, Istanbul Islands Foundation, and the Public Administration Association.

As this is our first issue, we extend our sincere thanks to the professors who supported us by trusting and agreeing to be on our advisory board, the authors who contributed to this issue with their articles by responding to our call for papers, and the reviewers who carefully evaluated these articles. Recognizing that maintaining a publication in public administration demands ongoing dedication and collaboration, similar to all other scientific fields, we commit to the hard work required to bring *Publicus* to fruition.

Editor

Fatma Eda Çelik

EPHE / Université PSL, France-Paris