



Editorial: Sustainable public administration

Heinrichs, Harald; Laws, Norman

Published in:
Sustainability

DOI:
[10.3390/su13116382](https://doi.org/10.3390/su13116382)

Publication date:
2021

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Heinrichs, H., & Laws, N. (2021). Editorial: Sustainable public administration. *Sustainability*, 13(11), Article 6382. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13116382>

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Editorial

Sustainable Public Administration

Harald Heinrichs * and Norman Laws

Institute for Public Sustainability Governance, Faculty of Sustainability, Leuphana University Lüneburg 1, 21335 Lüneburg, Germany; norman.laws@uni.leuphana.de

* Correspondence: harald.heinrichs@uni.leuphana.de

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), was agreed upon by 193 member states of the United Nations in September 2015. Given the size of the ongoing challenge to redirect unsustainable pathways toward sustainable development, state and non-state actors alike are strongly encouraged by the agreement to contribute. The private sector, for example, is expected to introduce sustainable management practices and develop sustainable business models; sciences should contribute through the analysis and development of solutions; civil society is invited to participate inter alia in searching and testing new and more sustainable practices; and citizens are invited to support the endeavor through sustainable consumption. Despite the undisputable importance of non-state actors for achieving the SDGs, state institutions have a special role to play. On the one hand, policy making for sustainable development is required at the international, national, and subnational level to shape the political setting in which societal actors can develop and realize more sustainable actions. On the other hand, public administrations are challenged to lead by example and develop capabilities to administer transformation processes toward sustainable development professionally. Even though thirty years of social science research on (un)sustainable development as well as on governance of sustainable development have generated a vast body of knowledge, the focus has rarely been on the quest for sustainability in public administration.

With this background, this anthology presents eleven articles from different world regions with varying political, socioeconomic, and cultural contexts addressing a broad range of key challenges and topics of sustainable development such as the circular economy, climate change, technological innovation, aviation, and sustainable business models. Looking at these issues from the perspective of sustainable public administration, the articles can be clustered into three research and development areas: (1) sustainable public administration and human capacity, (2) sustainable public administration and organizational dimensions, and (3) sustainable public administration and governance. The article “Icebergs of Expertise-Based Leadership: The Role of Expert Leaders in Public Administration” by Sadia Hanif, Ali Ahsan, and Graham Wise and the contribution “Change from Within: Exploring Transformative Literacy in Public Administrations to Foster Sustainability Transitions” highlight the importance of individual capacities, especially of leadership personnel, in developing and routinizing a transformative sustainable public administration. This human resources perspective is closely linked with the second cluster of articles: The publications of Hinrika Droege, Andreas Raggi, and Tomás B. Ramos (“Overcoming Current Challenges for Circular Economy Assessment Implementation in Public Sector Organisations”), Miguel Soberón, Teresa Sánchez-Chaparro, Julia Urquijo, and David Pereira (“Introducing an Organization Perspective in SDG Implementation in the Public Sector in Spain: The Case of the Former Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Environment”), and Friederike Behr, Gero Oertzen, and Manuel Dienst (“Managing Sustainability and Carbon-Neutrality in the Public Administration—Case Report of a German State Institution”) discuss essential organizational challenges and possibilities for the institutionalization of sustainability in public administrations, and Louis Meuleman proposes an integrative approach for public administration and governance capable of driving the implementation of the global Sustainable Development Goals (“Public Ad-



Citation: Heinrichs, H.; Laws, N. Sustainable Public Administration. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 6382. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13116382>

Academic Editor: Marc A. Rosen

Received: 31 May 2021

Accepted: 2 June 2021

Published: 4 June 2021

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2021 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

ministration and Governance for the SDGs: Navigating between Change and Stability”). The majority of articles, however, look at (potential) roles of public administrations in sustainability governance, building a third cluster. The spectrum ranges from reflections on citizen participation vis a vis public administration by Maria V. Pevnaya, Anna A. Drozdova, and Mariana Cernicova-Buca (“Making Room for Volunteer Participation in Managing Public Affairs: A Russian Experience”), conceptualizing public administration within multistakeholder climate policy contexts by Winfried Osthorst (“Tensions in Urban Transitions. Conceptualizing Conflicts in Local Climate Policy”), a proposal to enable the expansion of sustainable business models (“A Step-by-Step Process towards an Evolutionary Policy Encouraging the Adoption of Sustainable Business Models”) by Angelo Paletta, Eleonora Foschi, Genc Alimehmeti, and Alessandra Bonoli, the particular role of public administration for fostering sustainability in air freight transportation highlighted through the COVID-19 pandemic (“Sustainability and Air Freight Transportation: Lessons from the Global Pandemic”), as well as the capacity of public administration to shape conditions for sustainable technology and innovation by Fu-Hsuan Chen and Hao-Ren Liu (“Evaluation of Sustainable Development in Six Transformation Fields of the Central Taiwan Science Park”).

In sum, the articles compiled in this anthology provide a conceptually, empirically, and practically diverse insight into important issues of sustainable public administrations around the globe. Encouraging perspectives are presented, and a significant need to act is identified. Based on the insights of this publication, the perspective of *sustainable public administration* can be considered a promising field of work for researchers, consultants, and practitioners alike.

List of Contributions

1. Meuleman, L. Public Administration and Governance for the SDGs: Navigating between Change and Stability. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 5914, doi:10.3390/su13115914.
2. Jacob, K.; Paulick-Thiel, C.; Teebken, J.; Veit, S.; Singer-Brodowski, M. Change from Within: Exploring Transformative Literacy in Public Administrations to Foster Sustainability Transitions. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 4698, doi:10.3390/su13094698.
3. Chen, F.-H.; Liu, H.-R. Evaluation of Sustainable Development in Six Transformation Fields of the Central Taiwan Science Park. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 4336, doi:10.3390/su13084336.
4. Bartle, J.R.; Lutte, R.K.; Leuenberger, D.Z. Sustainability and Air Freight Transportation: Lessons from the Global Pandemic. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 3738, doi:10.3390/su13073738.
5. Droege, H.; Raggi, A.; Ramos, T.B. Overcoming Current Challenges for Circular Economy Assessment Implementation in Public Sector Organisations. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 1182, doi:10.3390/su13031182.
6. Paletta, A.; Foschi, E.; Alimehmeti, G.; Bonoli, A. A Step-by-Step Process towards an Evolutionary Policy Encouraging the Adoption of Sustainable Business Models. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 1176, doi:10.3390/su13031176.
7. Osthorst, W. Tensions in Urban Transitions. Conceptualizing Conflicts in Local Climate Policy Arrangements. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 78, doi:10.3390/su13010078.
8. Pevnaya, M.V.; Drozdova, A.A.; Cernicova-Buca, M. Making Room for Volunteer Participation in Managing Public Affairs: A Russian Experience. *Sustainability* **2020**, *12*, 10229, doi:10.3390/su122410229.
9. Soberón, M.; Sánchez-Chaparro, T.; Urquijo, J.; Pereira, D. Introducing an Organizational Perspective in SDG Implementation in the Public Sector in Spain: The Case of the Former Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Environment. *Sustainability* **2020**, *12*, 9959, doi:10.3390/su12239959.

10. Hanif, S.; Ahsan, A.; Wise, G. Icebergs of Expertise-Based Leadership: The Role of Expert Leaders in Public Administration. *Sustainability* **2020**, *12*, 4544, doi:10.3390/su12114544.
11. Behr, F.; Oertzen, G.; Dienst, M. Managing Sustainability and Carbon-Neutrality in the Public Administration—Case Report of a German State Institution. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 4146, doi:10.3390/su13084146.

Conflicts of Interest: No conflicts of interest.