

## **Letter from the Editor** **Lettre du rédacteur en chef**

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## Letter from the Editor

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**Christian Rouillard**

Governance is a complex issue, and the topics related to it have many political, administrative, economic, social, and cultural dimensions. This first issue of the second volume of *Revue gouvernance* exemplifies this complexity, as well as the dimensions of the topics that compose it. In fact, the following pages offer the reader four papers dealing with main topics of public administration and policy analysis: performance measurement and results based management in the public sector; discretionary power of high-ranking civil servants; globalization process as local space of redefinition of national governance mechanisms; and finally, passive privatization of health systems. The common ground of these four papers is their critical dimension. Each paper distinguishes itself, in its own manner, from the common literature on its subject matter. Each paper offers an original reading, sometimes even strongly differentiated, from what we still have to call, by default, the dominant discourse.

In the first paper, Dalie Giroux and Anne-Marie Hallé (University of Ottawa) look into the dynamic relationship between public and private sectors in health and social services field in Quebec. Using a diachronic analysis, the authors demonstrate how the evolution of the modes of financing in this sector allowed private firms, in the last 20 years, to increase the nature and the scale of their role, and to impose progressively their market logic on the entire regime. The effects of this health-passive privatization for the Quebecois governance are not only multiple and significant, they are also carrying a learning potential for the other sectors. The Quebecois project *Politique du médicament du Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux*, analyzed in the last part of their paper, is a convincing exemplification of this interweaving, or even subordination, between public and private spheres. Their reflection is all the more heavily loaded with consequences since public-private partnerships seem to be, after the election of the Liberal government in April 2003, the favorite mechanism of Quebecois state modernization.

Pascal Dufour (Université de Montréal) distinguishes herself, in the second paper, from the interdisciplinary literature regarding globalization: she takes as starting point the idea that globalization is not an external factor that waits on social movements and interest groups activity, but rather a space of discourse and political actions that participates in shaping the dynamic forms of social protest, to the same extent that its political articulation is, in part, shaped by the national, regional, and local institutional context. After elaborating a theoretical perspective that allows capturing this multidirectional dynamic, the author presents a case study of French and Canadian protest movements against economic globalization, in the neo-liberal meaning of the term, between 1993 and 2003. These two cases allow a better understanding, in different institutional contexts and historical trajectories, of the challenge represented by globalization (as political space) for left movements, and for the creation of an alter-globalization movement strong enough to question the hegemony of neo-liberal agenda.

Mark Schaan (University of Oxford) is interested in a topic much neglected in public administration and managerial studies: the discretionary power of high-ranking civil servants as an explanatory factor of the real and concrete content of public policies. Starting from the premise that public policies take on their particular meaning only through their implementation, the author analyzes the distance, or even the antinomy, between the law specifying the parameters of a program, in this case the welfare reform in Ontario and Manitoba, and the interpretation given by the discretionary power of civil servants who implement it. Using a non-participant observational approach, as well as semi-structured interviews with civil servants and clients-citizens from the two provinces, the author demonstrates the considerable extent of this discretionary power with respect to welfare reform, as well as the high complexity of political and administrative innovation process. The author concludes that we have to question the nature and the extent of this discretionary power: it represents such an important distortion factor that, in certain cases, it can change completely the meaning of the reform of a program such as welfare.

Finally, the paper of Kimberley Speers (University of Alberta) goes, in a way, against the managerial literature concerning performance measurement and results-based management. Developing an argument based, among other things, on 76 semi-structured interviews with civil servants and politicians, the author presents a balanced critique of last decade Alberta experience. Although Alberta is undeniably a figurehead of this managerial movement, it remains impossible to conclude that performance measurement was implemented without being used as governmental propaganda. Beyond the pretensions of expertise, which often envelope the measurement of the performance, the author reminds us that in a highly political environment, performance measurement and results-based management have much more to do with the communication than with the measurement.

In conclusion, we have to thank Consuela Mioc, Ph.D. candidate in political science (School of Political Studies, University of Ottawa) and research assistant for Canada Research Chair on Governance and Public Management, for participating in formatting the manuscripts and translating certain texts of this issue.

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