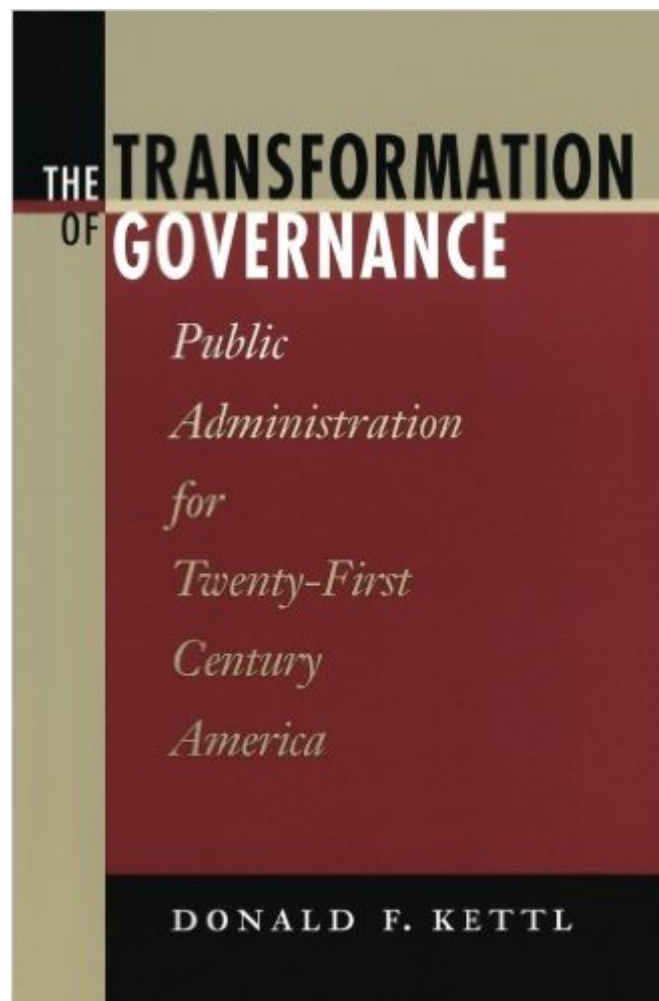


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The Transformation Of Governance: Public Administration For Twenty-First Century America (Interpreting American Politics)



Synopsis

The theory of public administration has long been based on the notions of hierarchy and authority. However, the way managers actually manage has increasingly become at odds with the theory. The growing gap between theory and practice poses enormous challenges for managers in determining how best to work and for American government in determining how best to hold public administrators accountable for effectively doing their jobs. In the quest to improve the practice of public administration, Kettl explains, political scientists and other scholars have tried a number of approaches, including formal modeling, implementation studies, a public management perspective, and even institutional choice. This book offers a new framework for reconciling effective administration with the requirements of democratic government. Instead of thinking in terms of organizational structure and management, Kettl suggests, administrators and theorists need to focus on "governance," or links between government and its broader environment—political, social, and administrative. Government is the collection of institutions that act with authority and create formal obligations; governance is the set of processes and institutions, formal and informal, through which social action occurs. Linking government and governance, Kettl concludes, is the foundation for understanding the theory and practice of government in twenty-first century America—for making public programs work better and for securing the values on which the American republic has been built.

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IntroductionThe Kuhnian notion of a 'paradigm shift' (Kuhn, 1970, p. 163) described the idea that established doctrines can perpetuate in the face of contradictory evidence only as long as the community which espouse these doctrines continues their shared belief by using the paradigm to "...acquire theory, methods, and standards..." (p. 109). Eventually, however, enough evidence is accumulated, enough contradictions are observed, and enough brave pioneers cause the community to undergo--either rapidly, or typically more gradually--an irreversible "...revolutionary transformation of vision" (p. 112) into a new paradigm. In Kettl's (2002) book, *The Transformation of Governance: Public Administration for Twenty-First Century America*, the lessons from Kuhn are not far from mind, as Kettl speaks to the community of public administrators and lays out evidence that governance is in need of transformation if today's complex policy challenges are to be suitably addressed. The principle issue with which Kettl is concerned is that "the way we think about and study public administration is out of sync with the way we practice it" (p. xi). His central argument is that the original paradigm of public administration, as defined by hierarchical authority in government bureaucracies, is proving unable to deal successfully with twenty-first century policy challenges that span the boundaries between government branches, multiple functionally-organised bureaucracies and a complex array of non-governmental actors. Furthermore, in addition to the 'traditional' organisational design problems of traditional public administration, other forces are at work that stretch the ability of government to solve policy problems successfully: globalisation, devolution and hyper-pluralism.

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