Call for Papers: The New Landscape of Public Administration - Trends, Challenges, and Future Pathways

Building on its legacy under previous titles – *Kommunal Ekonomi och Politik* (1997–2009) and *Offentlig Förvaltning: Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration* (2010–2013) – the *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration* (SJPA) has, over the past three decades, established itself as a central platform for scholars and practitioners engaged in the study of public administration across Scandinavia.

As we mark the 30th anniversary of the journal, this special issue offers an opportunity to reflect on past contributions while charting out future directions in public sector research. Since its inception, SJPA has documented key developments in governance, from the rise of New Public Management (NPM) and market-driven reforms in the 1990s to current debates on digitalization, sustainability, and collaborative governance.

Themes of the Past

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the journal engaged critically with market-oriented reforms and strategic governance. Influenced by the NPM wave, early articles explored how public sector organizations might reconcile efficiency with democratic accountability (Forssell, 1999; Rombach, 1997). Strategic municipal planning (Brorström & Bäck, 1997; Lundin, 1997) and leadership ethics in resource-constrained contexts were widely discussed, along with early investigations into citizen participation and local democracy (Westerståhl, 1997).

The 2000s extended these debates into contracting, collaboration and public-private partnerships (Almqvist, 2000; Bukve, 2000), reflecting the growing use of cross-sectoral solutions to complex problems, from infrastructure and welfare services to health and education.

Recurrent Themes

Over time, local government themes have persisted but in new cuts. Municipal amalgamations were discussed by Erlingsson, Wångmar, and Ödalen (2010), democratic governance (Sørensen & Torfing, 2011), local government transparency in Norway (Torsteinsen & Bjørnå, 2012), as well as, urban (Johnsen & Reinholde, 2018) and regional governance in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark (Røiseland et al., 2015; Runde Krogstad & Dotterud Leiren, 2019). Ethical leadership continues to be crucial in managing complex, multi-level governance (Tengblad & Jönsson, 2000; Tengblad & Oudhuis, 2024), and public trust remains a pressing concern, especially in fragmented institutional landscapes (Rønshaugen et al., 2024).

Collaboration and co-creation, once centered on institutional partnerships, have increasingly emphasized participatory models that include citizens directly in policy-making and service design (Agger & Hedensted Lund, 2017; Hedensted Lund, 2018). These developments signal a gradual shift from hierarchical governance toward inclusive, networked approaches.

Evolving Directions

From the 2010s onward, the journal has expanded to cover major societal and technological shifts. The digitalization of public administration and the growing use of big data and AI (Fredriksson et al., 2017; Kristensen, 2023; Pulkkinen et al., 2025) have prompted questions about transparency, ethics, and effectiveness in data-driven governance.

Projectification (Forssell et al., 2013; Fred, 2015; Jacobsen, 2022; Löfgren & Poulsen, 2013; Sjöblom et al., 2013) has emerged as a key governance trend, reflecting the rise of temporary structures aimed at flexibility and innovation—though not without concerns about fragmentation and sustainability of long-term objectives.

Sustainability has increasingly taken center stage, with research exploring the role of public sector institutions in promoting climate action, environmental planning, and social sustainability (Hofstad & Torfing, 2015; Huijbens et al., 2014; Kettunnen et al., 2020; Westin et al., 2024).

Looking Ahead: Future Directions for Public Administration Research

The field must now respond to intensifying global challenges, including digital governance, climate change, and institutional design and complexity. Future studies will need to assess the ethical and democratic implications of AI and digitalization, critically evaluate project-based governance models, and develop frameworks for resilient, sustainable public services.

Ethical leadership, once again, will play a central role in balancing innovation, responsiveness, and accountability, just as institutional quality, all dimensions of sustainability, and robustness towards crises.

Call for Papers: A Broad Invitation

To commemorate this milestone, we invite contributions from a range of disciplines—public policy, political science, organization studies, management, accounting, and auditing—that reflect on past developments and explore emerging frontiers in public administration research.

We welcome theoretical, empirical, and comparative studies, including historical perspectives, future scenarios, and interdisciplinary approaches.

Co-Creation and Collaborative Governance:
• How does co-creation affect public sector innovation, and what challenges arise from such participatory approaches?
• How can public organizations design collaborative governance models that effectively incorporate citizen input and expertise?
• What are the most effective mechanisms for fostering cross-sector collaboration in public policy development and service delivery?

Digital Transformation, Digitalization and Big Data:
• What are the opportunities and challenges of using AI and big data to enhance decision-making in public administration?
• How can governments address the ethical dilemmas of privacy, data ownership, and accountability in an increasingly digital governance landscape?
• In what ways does digitalization reshape the relationship between citizens and public institutions?

• How can governments use digital tools to enhance citizen engagement and participation in governance?

• What are the unintended consequences of digital transformation in public sector accountability?

Ethical Leadership and Accountability:

• How can public sector leaders navigate complex ethical dilemmas in the face of growing demands for efficiency and transparency?

• What are the mechanisms for fostering ethical accountability in multi-level governance structures?

• How do ethical frameworks shape policy implementation and influence public trust in public sector organizations?

Sustainability and Innovation:

• How can public sector organizations innovate to meet the challenges of environmental, economic, and social sustainability?

• How can public organizations integrate sustainability goals into their operational strategies and policy frameworks?

• What innovative approaches to sustainability governance are emerging in local and regional public sectors?

• How do governments balance the need for economic growth with environmental and social sustainability?

Projectification and Public Sector Reforms:

• What are the long-term effects of project-based governance structures on public sector performance and stability?

• How do project-based reforms influence leadership dynamics and accountability in public organizations?

• How can public sector organizations ensure coherent policy outcomes in an environment of increasing projectification?

Public Trust and Institutional Complexity:

• How can public organizations maintain and rebuild trust in the context of institutional complexity and conflicting policy objectives?

• What strategies can governments employ to enhance citizen engagement and trust in public services?

• In what ways does institutional complexity affect transparency and accountability in public administration?

Governance Networks and Inter-organizational Collaboration:

• How can public organizations better manage inter-organizational collaboration to achieve policy objectives?

• What governance models best support multi-actor partnerships in tackling complex societal issues?

Performance Management and Public Sector Accountability:

• How can performance management systems be adapted to ensure greater accountability in public services?

• What is the role of auditing in ensuring effective governance in the face of NPM reforms?

Crisis Management and Resilience:

• What governance models are most effective for crisis management and building public sector resilience?

• How can governments prepare for future crises while maintaining public trust and accountability?

30th Anniversary Workshop at POMAA 2025

A workshop for this special issue will be held during the 3rd *Public Organising, Management, Accounting and Auditing Conference* (POMAA), May 7–8, 2025, at the School of Public Administration, University of Gothenburg, Sweden. The workshop will provide an opportunity to present and develop ideas in dialogue with peers and guest editors.

Important Dates

Article submissions open on May 26, 2025. The deadline for full-text submissions to the special issue is December 19, 2025. The special issue is expected to be published in March 2027.

Accepted articles will be published on a rolling basis as "articles in press" ahead of the final issue release.

Guest Editors

Johan Berlin , *University West, Sweden*
Ylva Norén Bretzer , *University of Gothenburg, Sweden*
Björn Brorström, *Kristianstad University, Sweden*
Cemil Eren Fırtın , *University of Gothenburg, Sweden*
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Please submit your contributions at https://publicera.kb.se/sjpa/about/submissions

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