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## Varieties of New Public Management and Public Service Employment Relations: An International Comparison

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Public service employment relations reform has come under increased scrutiny in many OECD countries. For more than two decades, this agenda has been dominated by the New Public Management (NPM) reform approach, focusing on the removal of differences between the public and private sectors and using market-oriented mechanisms of governance, alongside private-sector human resource management techniques.

In employment relations, this raised expectations of a double process of convergence: between private and public sector within each country and in the public sector between different countries. There has been recognition, however, of the Anglophone bias of NPM, criticism of its public choice and principal-agent conceptual assumptions and scepticism about naïve expectations of a world-wide process of convergence. There is an increasingly lively debate about post-NPM developments in public sector reform with a focus on new public governance and 'modernisation'. Several scholars underline the existence of *varieties* of NPM. Indeed, in several cases (e.g. parts of Continental Europe) recent trajectories are better understood as distinctive reform models, termed a *neo-Weberian state*. Within the public sector literature, these developments are rooted in organizational sociology rather than neo-classical economics and are associated with more integrated governance and new forms of regulation; a focus on user-centred services; an emphasis on rebuilding trust with professionals to ensure accessible, high-quality services. Nonetheless there is far less certainty about the forms and outcomes of these developments, and the extent to which they supersede or complement previous NPM type reforms and the way they affect public service employment relations.

The symposium analyses these trends building on the convergence/divergence tradition. It focuses on the *varieties* of public management reforms and the consequences for employment relations. To what extent is a shift or detachment from NPM reforms discernible and if so, what are the main influences on this reform agenda, what are its key features, and what have been the main outcomes? The symposium focuses on a comparative analysis of the adoption, implementation and effects of NPM/post-NPM inspired reforms of public service employment relations in key countries with different legal and institutional traditions. The choice of countries broadens analysis from the Anglophone countries that dominate the literature to incorporate clusters that have been subject to different forms and intensity of reform. The following cluster of countries will be examined: Mediterranean cluster (France, Italy, Portugal, Spain); Nordic cluster (Denmark & related Scandinavian cases); Central Europe cluster; Southern Africa cluster (South Africa and related Southern African cases); Anglo/US cluster (UK and USA); Australasia (Australia and New Zealand).

### Participants

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