

What should the Government do (or not do)? Tasks of government in light of administrative reconstruction

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Abstract: The literature of recent years started to pay again attention to the core PA issue of "which are the tasks of government? . Particularly in the context of the post NPM , post NWS , in light of the NPG paradigm, as well as of the recent global social problems (migration, climate change, and cyberrisks, to name a few), the discussion concerning "what should the government do" has received a new life. The reform paradigms of the last forty years have dedicated attention to a rather implicit level on the issue, and focused more on general efficiency and effectiveness instruments for the provision of public service. But the reform waves of the last 40 years have had consequences not only for "how are the tasks of government being performed", but also for the reflection on behalf of the public administration scholars and practitioners alike on "what should government do".

In current paper we conduct a literature review on the topic of tasks of government in the light of the different reform paradigms, with particular attention on the non-western perspectives. Whereas the explicit discourse of reform focused on improving service provision, responsiveness, and citizen participation, we argue that it is relevant to investigate also the consequences of the reforms for the theoretical definition of the task of government. Particularly the contradiction between the public and political discourse outlining the need to minimize governmental involvement in societal life contradicts with the calls to action on behalf of government and blaming for lack of action in other situation provides an interesting view on the fundamental issue of "what should the government do in a continuously changing world"? The preliminary answer to this question focuses on providing societal well-being. Against the backdrop of democratic backsliding, and the questions related to the reconstruction of administrative institutions after periods of prolonged conflict, the question regarding "what does the government do" remains more actual than ever.