



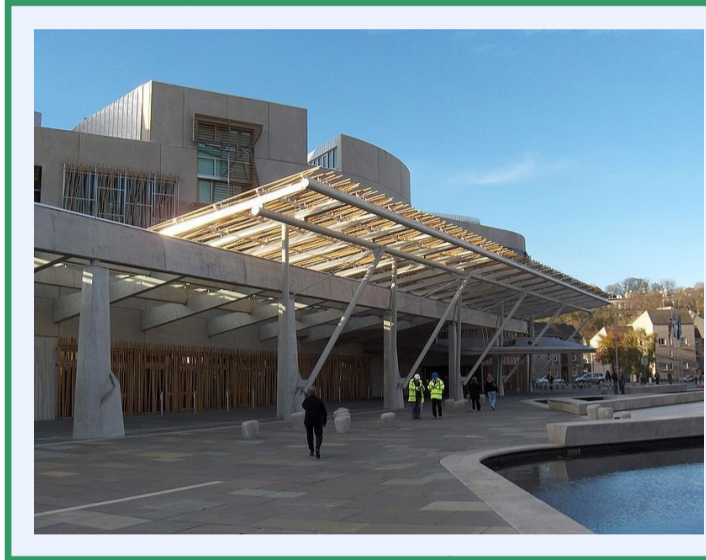
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## Background

In 1999, following a referendum of the Scottish people, a new devolved Scottish Parliament was established in Edinburgh (see photo). Among other changes, responsibility for many public services devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

Devolution was widely perceived as an opportunity to reform and improve Scotland's public services, and indeed, there were numerous attempts at reform of those services in the decade after devolution.

But as commonly applies to public services, while there is widespread agreement that reform and improvement are needed, there is less agreement on how this can or should be achieved.



**The new Scottish Parliament Building, opened October 2004.**

Source: Wikipedia Commons

## What I Did

- ❖ I undertook a thematic review of the past 20 years of public service research in 14 key academic and practice journals. I also examined all the outputs of the ESRC Public Services Programme (PSP).

- ❖ To supplement the literature review, I conducted an online survey among academics in public management research to ascertain their perceptions of: the field per se; funding availability; possibilities for collaborative work; focus and dissemination of research.

- ❖ I have been instrumental in establishing the Scottish Public Management Network (SPMN), in particular by organizing workshops and seminars and developing its website into a resource for researchers and practitioners.

## Aims

This project took the form of a fellowship aimed at taking stock and developing analytic capacity in public services management in Scotland. It had three main aims:

- ❖ to look at the current state of knowledge on public service management and reform and its relevance to the Scottish context;
- ❖ to examine the existing public management research capacity in Scotland and explore ways in which this could be developed; and
- ❖ to facilitate the development of a Scottish Public Management Network (SPMN) aimed at fostering dialogue and collaboration between academics, practitioners and policy makers.

*NOT Powerpoints and pastries, but one day, a circle of chairs, a whiteboard or videocamera, STRATEGIC representatives from 10-40 academic, practitioner, local government/public body stakeholders, a 25 year plan, 5 scenarios, and heated debate? Let people speak from their expertise without having to justify/privatise their knowledge or privileging some participants as speakers and others as audience 'with input'. [In other areas], nobody would be wasting so much time jumping through institutional hoops and sticking with long-established but dissatisfying procedures and methodologies. How about some real engagement? How about some direct funding/activity? There seems to be plenty of unharnessed passion...*

(Respondent #18)

### Developing a Vibrant Scottish Public Management Research Field

An SPMN Discussion Paper

Tobias Jung and Stephen P Osborne  
Edinburgh, July 2009

Discussion Paper

## Findings

- ❖ The literature review revealed widespread conceptual confusion and definitional diversity: concepts such as 'partnership' or 'accountability' were used in multiple, often contradictory ways, and were heavily dependent on cultural and sectoral contexts. The PSP has produced a concentrated body of work in some key areas, but the conclusion from the majority of the work surveyed is that there is often only a limited basis for drawing firm, transferable policy and practice lessons.

- ❖ The online survey, discussion paper (pictured opposite) and workshops highlighted a need to bridge existing silos of knowledge and research activity in the field of Scottish public management research.

- ❖ The newly created SPMN was designed to meet this need by facilitating dialogue between its members via its website [www.scothub.org](http://www.scothub.org) which is being developed into a wider roadmap of the Scottish public management field. The SPMN has already attracted over 130 members from academic, policy and practice settings and has established links with key bodies within and outside Scotland such as the Public Management and Policy Association and the Scottish Policy Innovation Forum.

Find out more...

ScotHub



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[www.scothub.org](http://www.scothub.org)  
[www.publicservices.ac.uk](http://www.publicservices.ac.uk)

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ECONOMIC  
& SOCIAL  
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