Towards the Construction of Knowledge in Public Governance as Field of Scientific Enquiry

Dr. Gerrit Van Der Waldt
Research Professor: Governance
Research Focus Area: Social Transformation
North-West University
Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom2520
South Africa

Abstract

Public Governance is a rapidly growing field of scientific enquiry. Therefore academics involved in Public Governance often find it difficult to construct knowledge and to direct the curricula of educational programs and qualifications in this field. This is largely due to often competing paradigmatic perspectives on Public Administration, as well as the absence of a comprehensive framework through which to consider the various dimensions and theoretical vantage points from which governance phenomena could be studied.The purpose of this article is to propose three constructions, namely a (trans-)disciplinary perspective, a force-field construction, and a path dependency construction, to facilitate knowledge production within the field of Public Governance.

Keywords: Knowledge construction, Knowledge production, Public Administration, Public Governance, Transdisciplinary research, Force-field analysis**,** Path dependency

1. Introduction

In his work *Knowledge for What?* Robert Lynd (1939) reflected on the purpose or the relevance of knowledge. How can knowledge be constructed and applied meaningfully to study social phenomena? This article aims to expound on the Knowledge for What?-question within the context of Public Governance as an emerging field of study. The guiding question for this purpose is: What should be included in the study domain (locus and focus of study) of Public Governance? In other words, how should knowledge be constructed to focus enquiry meaningfully into governance related phenomena and to direct the curricula of educational programs and qualifications in the field of Public Governance in a relevant way? Which forms of universal and specific knowledge already exist and what is the nature of the possible angles and paradigms from which the phenomenon could be approached? To what extent should the knowledge product(s) of Public Governance be informed by the interplay of different disciplines (transdisciplinarity)?

The purpose of this article is to propose three main constructions in an attempt to facilitate the production of knowledge of Public Governance as domain of scientific enquiry. Due to the multi-faceted and dynamic nature of this field of study, this article does not purport to provide a complete construction of Public Governance (hence the title *"Towards* a knowledge construction ...”). It does attempt, however, to contribute to the global discourse on the emerging knowledge domain of the field of Public Governance.

2. *Knowledge Construction Demystified*
The way knowledge is constructed in the epistemology and sociology of social sciences has always been a contested field (Bruno, 1989; Hyland &Bondi, 2006). In the social sciences it is generally expected that academic discourse will offer a model of rationality and reasoning to clarify social phenomena. Models that are derived from such a scientific discourse are tested through the screening of empirical evidence (in a positivist paradigm), by logic, and objective argumentation and explanations. Underlying this “realist” model is the idea that knowledge is built on experiment, induction, replication, and falsifiability (Gauch, 2003:22).

In this regard the philosopher of the natural sciences, Karl Popper (1972:28), proposed a "falsification" model, which suggests that mental models (or constructions) and theories should be tested through experimental research and "defective" ones should be replaced with more reliable and verifiable models and theories. The reality, however, is that theories (including hypotheses) and models in the social sciences cannot always be tested with absolute certainty.

The problem associated with scientific knowledge is that interpretation depends on the assumptions social scientists postulate (Kuhn, 1970). That is, all scientific discourse occurs within a paradigmatic context and in relation to a theory which fits observation and data in meaningful patterns. Hyland (1999:342) in this regard states that the construction of academic facts entails a social process, the outcome of a cultural activity shaped by ideology and the on-going discourse with a skeptical science community. He (Hyland) continues to demonstrate that all knowledge products display a "careful balance of factual information and social interaction". Since theorists can only guide understanding of a particular interpretation rather than demonstrate proof, readers always have the option of refuting such interpretations. Theorists therefore should be familiar with related theories and counterarguments and they should frame their contributions in ways that the science community will find convincing.

2.1 Disciplinary conventions

The philosophical roots of academic disciplines, as knowledge domains, can be traced back to the classical works of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. In his work *Gorgias*, Plato wrote that philosophical thinking is required to ensure rational, logical and empirical inferences from observations. Alexander (2011:195) builds on this idea by arguing that academics pursue pure thought, which are "free-floating" and "independent of particular commitments". Habermas also postulates that academics should be constantly concerned with "unfettered critical discourse" (Alexander, 2011:195).

Disciplines attempt to classify knowledge in order to create order and structure (Foucault, 1979:223; Doheny, Cook & Stopper, 1987). Liles *et al.* (1995) and Abbott (2001) echo this view and add that disciplines can also be regarded as a method to study certain phenomena. Disciplines developed over time due to the broadening of knowledge production through scientific enquiry. Disciplines within the applied branch of science also have a strong commitment to practice the application of knowledge (Keen, 1980; Denning, 1989).

Beyer and Lodahl (1976) and Becher (1987) described the function of disciplinary domains as the following: to provide a structure of knowledge in which the academic fraternity is trained and socialized; to carry out tasks of teaching, research, and administration and to produce research and educational output. Currently there is a healthy debate about the criteria and elements that should be present to constitute a legitimate disciplinary field (*see* Bath & Smith, 2004; Grant, 2007; Harland & Staniforth, 2008; Macfarlane & Hughes, 2009). Notwithstanding the debate, the number of disciplines offered by universities globally has expanded significantly. Among the elements that feature in the debate are the presence of a community of scholars, a tradition or history of inquiry, a mode of inquiry that defines how data is collected and interpreted and what the requirements are for those facets that constitute new knowledge. To this Ranney (1971:638) adds that a discipline can be defined by its focus (i.e. what is studied); its knowledge base (theory, empirical knowledge); and its methods of knowledge production.

Furthermore, disciplines, according to Keen (1980), Salvendy (1982), and Liles *et al.* (1995) are characterized by the following aspects:

- the nature and focus of the research to be undertaken;
- global perspectives and paradigms;
- related (adjacent or reference) disciplines;
- principles and practices;
- research and theory development;
- promotion of professionalism;
- the content of qualifications and academic programs;
- the nature of academic journals that publish research results in the field;
- the nature and extent of the functioning of professional bodies and associations;
- the nature and scope of departments and faculties to which theorists belong.

For purposes of this article an important aspect that needs to be kept in mind is that disciplines do typically build on theories developed in related disciplines.

Doheny, Cook and Stopper (1987) refer to related discipline as "reference" or "adjacent" disciplines. Keen (1980:11), Snodgrass (1987) and Denning (1989) argue, however, that a discipline should portray a particular uniqueness and should be distinguishable from other disciplines. So-called "mature" disciplines have well-developed theories, paradigms and vocabulary to construct knowledge (Abbott, 2001; Augsburg, 2005).

This concludes a brief synopsis of the nature of knowledge construction within disciplines. In the next section the focus will shift to the locus of this article, namely Public Governance as an emerging field of enquiry within Public Administration.

3. Public Governance as Emerging Discipline

The study of the administration of a state (Greek *polis*) has a rich history. Its origins in Europe can be traced back to 350BC with Plato's *Republic*, *Statesmen* and *Law*, and Aristotles' *Politics*. These contributions laid the foundation of "good" or "ideal" government. The philosophers of ancient times, however, did not set out the content of government as such. In the Roman order, classical theories about government further became prominent by means of Cicero's *Rule of Law* (1000BC) and Dante's ideas on "worthy" government in 1321. Machiavelli's *Mechanics of Government* (1513) and the works of John Locke and Thomas Hobbes led to the development of the science of politics. Later Montesque's *TriasPolitica* principles (1721) introduced a clearer demarcation of the legislative, judicial and executive (administration) branches of a government. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract* further gave impetus to the study of the state and government. The Social Contract Theory provided philosophical underpinnings for the mutual "contract" to be drawn up between government and society. These political thoughts ultimately culminated in the *Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States* (1933).

The significant events in political thinking regarding the role of government in a nation-state (as briefly highlighted above) shape the production of knowledge in Public Governance. It is important to note that classical thinking (theories, models, etc.) are not replaced by more modern views, but that contemporary thought simply build on more classical views. The relevance of a historical perspective is thus situated in understanding the influence that classical theories of state administration have on contemporary thinking about this field of study.

3.1 Public Governance: Concept and perspectives

It is generally accepted that the concept "government" is derived from a Greek word meaning "to steer" (*see* Osborne & Gaebler, 1992:25; Van der Waldt, 2004:5). In its simplest form, governance refers to the processes of decision-making, as well as the processes by which decisions are implemented (Kaufmann, Kraay & Zoido-Lobaton, 1999:3; Wood & Dupont, 2006:34). Governance refers to the activities or actions of a network of stakeholders and interest groups, including the ruling power as a state institution, to address specific social problems, which may also include policy interventions.

Governance can be studied and utilized in a wide variety of contexts:

- corporate governance (management practices within private sector enterprises);
- global governance (a particular geopolitical perspective; *see*Henry, 2010:38);
- environmental governance; and
- governance issues at different levels of government (i.e. local, regional, national and international).

Osborne and Gaebler (1992:34) state that there is less demand for government as an institution for delivery, but place greater emphasis on governance to "steer" the community toward common goals. Hughes (2003:76) further articulates a distinction between government and governance. He argues that governance refers to the institutions of the ruling power to govern, which is a much broader concept that includes forms of government. Henry (2010:38) in turn sums up the difference between government and governance as follows: "We are moving away from government, or the control over citizens and the delivery of public benefits to institutions or the state, and we are moving towards governance, or configuration or laws, policies or organizations, institutions, cooperative arrangements, and agreements that control citizens and deliver public benefits. Government is institutional; and yet governance institutional and networked."

In line with thinking in terms of systems, Bana and Basheka (2011) hold that political governance provides a broader, more comprehensive perspective. The reason is that political decisions ultimately influence economic policy, environmental policy, local government, projects and others. This contribution is important, given the objective of this article, namely to contribute to the construction of knowledge in the field of Public Governance.

From a disciplinary perspective, Frederickson (1997) argues that there are at least three different conceptions of governance:

- "Governance" as a surrogate for public management and policy implementation. Lynn *et al*. (2001) confirm this view and argue that governance forms part of an intellectual discourse that seeks to create a framework through which the diversity in multi-disciplinary literature on the broader understanding of present government can be united.
- "Governance" is equivalent to "managerialism" or the "New Public Management" (NPM) movement (*also see* Pollitt, 1993). This is particularly evident in countries that have made concerted efforts to reform their public sectors as an answer to the so-called "bureaucratic pathology" (*see*Kettl, 2000).
- "Governance" is a theoretical framework to explain networking between various interest groups. The hierarchical model of government remains dominant, but its influence is on the decline. The aim is to search for answers to complex problems, and to develop innovative and creative modes to tackle governance challenges. Government agencies are becoming less important as direct providers of services, but are more prominent as catalysts and facilitators for a web or network of multi-sectoral actors that increasingly characterize modern government.

Kooiman (2006) provides an operational definition for governance. He states that governance can be regarded as the totality of interactions, in which public and private actors participate, aimed at solving social problems, as well as providing socio-economic opportunities. Goldsmith and Eggers (2004) further propose different models of governance. The authors place governance on a matrix from low to high level of public-private sector partnerships and a low and a high degree of networking. It is argued that if a government, for example, to a significant extent forge partnerships with the private sector, such a government will be by nature more inclined to form networks. Kamarack and Nye (2002) in turn, make a valuable contribution as far as actors are concerned within a network configuration at different levels of government. They show that government is becoming increasingly "scattered" between international, national, provincial/regional and local stakeholders in the public sector, private enterprise, and the so-called "third sector".

Liability and accountability issues attached to network government are widely regarded as being some of the most challenging problems currently (McLaughlin, Osborne &Ferlie, 2002; Perri, Seltzer & Stoker, 2002). Bell and Hindmoor (2009), in turn, show that states enhance their capacity to govern by developing closer ties with non-government sectors, and identify five "modes" of government, namely governance through hierarchy, persuasion, markets and contracts, community engagement, and network associations.To summarize this part of the discussion, it could be argued that governance refers to the knowledge gained by the study of government as policy-making body in its governing function. Governance could thus be regarded as a *phenomenon* (activity or action) referring to the interaction between governmental institutions and society in an inter-dependent network, as well as a *field of study* (Public Governance), referring to the current paradigm in which the discipline of Public Administration positions itself internationally.

3.2 Striving towards good governance

Worldwide a shift is discernible in governance. Dissatisfaction and disillusionment over the lack of political solutions are wide-spread. Due to social transformation and technological progress, the values that were traditionally linked to government are also shifting (*see* Coston, 1998; Haque, 2004; Dixon & Dogan, 2005). These shifts include greater innovation in service delivery and an enterprising, entrepreneurial mindset (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Focus further shifts to the quality and performance of governance; the focus is on government outcomes (results), rather than remaining on its input (resources). This "outcomes-based" and "results-based" focus (*see* OECD and World Bank, 2008; UNDG, 2010) in government emphasizes the need for the application of universal principles of "good" governance.

Good governance in the field of economic and social development reflects the vocabulary and practices of international organizations, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization.

Although these initiatives are criticized for being overtly neo-liberal, they aim to enhance the efficiency of participating state administrations. Such initiatives are usually coupled with so-called "second-generation reforms" to build the capacities necessary for the development of societies (Van Kersbergen & Van Waarden, 2004:144-145).

Examples of such initiatives include the following: the World Bank's Good Governance programs, and on the African continent, initiatives such as the Afrobarometer, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation for Good Governance, the NEPAD sub-program for Good Governance and its Country Peer Review mechanisms. A further initiative is this respect is the Commission of the European Communities' *European Governance: A White Paper* (2001), which identifies five principles of good governance, namely openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness, and coherence.

As stated earlier, governments are characterized by an interdependent web of relationships between various actors and customer groups. These complex relationships make it difficult to determine the outcome (short-, medium-, and long-term) of government programs and to measure the impact of certain policies on society. Formulated policy goals are usually vague in nature and goal posts are typically constantly moving due to political dynamics. According to Stoop and Grabe (1993:24) the measurement of good governance is complicated by the fact that a wide range of variables, such as the environment, geo-politics, and the socio-economic context, impact on the operations of governments. Plumptre (1991:30) also indicates how certain factors affect the measurement of governments' performance. These factors include the availability and utilization of resources, the authority of public managers, as well as the quality of political decisions that are taken. Due to these realities there is currently no universally accepted formula or instrument to determine the degree of "goodness" of a government.

Although there is no such generally accepted formula for the measurement of good government, there is significant consensus (*see* Bratton & Van de Walle, 1992) that good governance should meet especially the following criteria:

- public participation policy decision as cradle of a healthy democracy;
- rule of law and impartial application of this law by the judicial systems and police service in order respect human rights;
- transparency in decision making and availability of information;
- responsiveness of state institutions to meet citizens' needs;
- orientated towards consensus among stakeholders to reconcile conflicting needs;
- equity and inclusivity;
- efficiency and effectiveness in the use of scarce resources; and
- accountability and responsibility for the delivery of services.

It should be noted that these criteria are not uniformly applied in countries. Due to reasons emanating from political-historical contexts, culture, trajectory of development, and economic conditions, countries do not perceive and apply these principles consistently.

According to the World Bank's criteria, good government consists of a public service that is effective, a judiciary that is reliable, and an administration that uses resources responsible – especially in financial and human resource management (World Bank, 2008). In addition the Bank has defined four basic elements of good governance, namely (i) accountability, (ii) public participation, (iii) predictability, and (iv) transparency. Also, the principles contained in the *African Public Service Charter* (2001), for example, attempt to promote good governance on the African continent. These principles include:

- equal treatment and behavior regardless of race, gender, ethnic group, political beliefs and faith;
- a neutral public service to look after the interests of all citizens; and
- continuity of service.

When Public Governance endeavors to construct knowledge, it should make provision for the inclusion of these principles. The construction should also incorporate the dynamics associated with good, outcomes-based, results-based, and network governance – as highlighted above. In the next section three constructs are proposed for the purpose of guiding the production of knowledge in the field of Public Governance.

4. Public Governance: Towards a Construction of Knowledge

As stated earlier, this article aims to contribute to the construction of knowledge in the field of Public Governance. Three constructions are proposed for this purpose:

- a (trans-)disciplinary construction;
- a force-field analysis construction;
- a path dependency construction.

These three constructions are presented as a basis for the domain and corpus of the knowledge on Public Governance.

Construction 1: Disciplinary perspectives

A content analysis of recent literature on governance confirms that it features strongly within the contemporary discourses in Public Administration and its study domain. However, current debates tend to be caught entangled in paradigmatic differences. This especially applies to the so-called "New Public Management" and "managerialism" paradigm, which has a strong business-like and vocational focus (Miller & Dunn, 2006). It could be argued that currently the knowledge domain of the discipline does not adequately provide for the dynamics and complexities that accompany the phenomenon of governance. Debates range from the perspectives first proposed by Cleveland (1972) that "governance" is an alternative to public administration, to the view of theorists who argue that "governance" is merely a buzzword that will eventually become obsolete (*see* Frederickson, 2004:2; Menzel& White, 2011).

Several definitions of Public Administration are suggested in literature, but a comprehensive theoretical and operational definition still eludes theorists. Kernaghan (2010) in this regard states that "... Public Administration has no generally accepted definition ... because the scope of the discipline is so great and so debatable that it is easier to explain it rather than to define it". Gerald Caiden, in his 1971 publication, *The Dynamics of Public Administration*, states that "... no one has a simple definition of Public Administration that is completely acceptable for both practitioners and scholars ..." Nicholas Henry (1989:20-51) also argues that "... Public Administration is a wide variety of amorphous combination of theory and practice." Since the early developments of Public Administration a lively debate about its locus and focus (knowledge construction and production) is thus evident.

As stated earlier, Public Administration theorists finds themselves internationally engaged in debates about the most prominent thought frameworks prevalent in countries and the nature of so-called paradigmatic shifts (*see* Thomas Kuhn, 1970), each with distinctive, but not exclusive, terminology, theories and approaches. There is currently no consensus on the specific paradigms and thus the way knowledge should be constructed in the discipline. The influence of often competing perspectives from disciplines such as economics, political sciences and sociology, as well as country-specific paradigms, further complicate such consensus. Henry (2010:27), for example, demarcates the paradigmatic development of Public Administration as follows:

- politics-administration paradigm (dichotomy) (1887-1926);
- principles of public administration (1927-1937);
- public administration as political science (1950-1970);
- public administration management (1950-1970);
- public administration as public administration (1970 to present); and
- (public) governance (1970 to present).

In turn, the discussion of Dwivedi and Williams (2011:21-22) on the paradigmatic developments, reflects the fact that since the late 1990s there has been a shift evident from Public Management to Governance. The governance paradigm was introduced with the view that good governance should be the catalyst for economic growth. This view is supported by the publications of the World Bank. These publications increasingly place stronger emphasis on the lack of good governance as the main cause of developmental problems in Third World countries. In 2000, Janet and Robert Denhardt (2000:550) proposed that a "new public service model" should be established in response to the New Public Management Model. They suggested that the New Public Service model be characterized by so-called "digital-era governance". Osborne and Gaebler (1992) and Pierre (2000) furthermore suggest in their workthat the role of governments in society and the way in which services are rendered, are changing from a role of "rowing" to "steering" (catalyst, directing and facilitator).

Based on the general orientation provided above, two observations can be made: the first centers around the status of Public Governance as distinct discipline, and the second observation focuses on the construction of knowledge within Public Governance. As far as the disciplinary status of Public Governance is concerned, it seems that two streams of thought are evident. According to the first stream of thought some theorists regard governance as just a normal development (i.e. paradigm) within the field of Public Administration. Therefore they merely add concepts, theories and models pertaining to governance to the curriculum of existing academic programs in Public Administration.

The second stream of thought seems to hold that Public Administration is too narrow in scope and therefore should be abandoned in favor of Public Governance, which, with regard to scientific enquiry, is seen as much broader in scope (*see* Osborne, 2010). Particularly Perri, Seltzer and Stoker (2002) support this view and propose a broader "holistic" perspective on governance. In the case of South African universities generally, the discipline first became known as "Public Administration" (1972); then as "Public Administration and Management" (1992); and from 2000 onwards more universities began referring to the discipline as "Public Governance". It thus seems that, in the case of South Africa, at least the latter stream of thought is prevalent.

The second observation pivots around the content (corpus of knowledge) of Public Administration vis-à-vis Public Governance. It could be argued that the existing epistemology of Public Administration is not adequately equipped to deal with the new values, theories, models and approaches that are attached to issues of governance (i.e. networking, being outcomes-based, "steering", part of the "digital-era", "goodness", being global, etc.). It could further be contended that academic offerings in Public Administration should extend its corpus of knowledge to incorporate theories, organizational/structural, socio-political and economic dimensions of Public Governance. From this perspective it could be argued that the construction and production of knowledge within Public Governance are internationally still in its infancy. It is proposed that a more comprehensive and integrated approach be followed to construct the knowledge domain of Public Governance. A trans-disciplinary perspective is put forward in this regard.

Public Governance as a product of trans-disciplinarity

The functions and tasks of government are dynamic in nature and experience continuous change due to national and international trends and events. Borins (1994) in this regard exposes the "organic nature" of government. In the execution of their governance function, governments, for example, increasingly become more inclusive and participatory. This particularly applies to the creation of networks and the interaction between government, business and civil society (Peter, 2008; Osborne, 2010).

Just as societal phenomena are to be understood in terms of its dynamics, the disciplines concerned with the study of these phenomena are also dynamic. Over time disciplines typically progress through various paradigmatic phases in which the discipline matures and turns into an established science. In this respect Van der Waldt (2009:14) explains that due to a dynamic environment, disciplines cannot "... remain relevant without constantly adjusting, rediscovering and enriching themselves by making use of theories, approaches, methodology, principles and concepts from established, related (reference of adjacent) disciplines".

According to Wiesmann, Hirsch, Hoffmann-Riem, Biber-Klemm, Grossenbacher, Joye, Pohl and Zemp (2008:435) trans-disciplinary research has arisen from the need for answers where knowledge of a single discipline is insufficient. Salmons and Wilson (2007) confirm this view and regard trans-disciplinarity as broader in scope than multi-disciplinarity, which relates to making use of several disciplines at once, or inter-disciplinarity, which combines two or more disciplines. Nicolescu (2005:7) in turn argues that trans-disciplinarity is about understanding the world and the "unity of knowledge". It, therefore, transgresses boundaries between scientific disciplines and between science and other societal fields, and includes deliberation about facts, practices and values. This "transgression" is healthy since such crossing usually leads to new insight and perspectives about the phenomena that are being researched. In this regard, Pohl and Hirsch-Hadorn (2007:124) refer to the "common good" that trans-disciplinarity brings.

Figure 1 below is an attempt to illustrate the inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary angles from which the field of Public Governance could be studied. It also attempts to show how primary, secondary and tertiary reference disciplines should support the production of knowledge within Public Governance. This figure by no means claims to be complete; it should be seen as "action" research, work in progress, and an attempt to contribute to current debates in the field.

Figure 1: Disciplinary knowledge construction of governance

Source: Author's own construction

Although dependent on the particular disciplinary focus of the researcher, the figure suggests that Public Administration and Political Science can be regarded as the most closely-related reference disciplines for the production of knowledge in Public Governance. On a primary level these disciplines should provide relevant theories, models, and paradigms that establish scientific underpinnings of governance-related phenomena. In this regard Chhotray and Stoker (2009: 18) illustrate how these two disciplines closely interact and bring particular cross-disciplinary vantage points to explore governance as phenomenon.

On a secondary level, disciplines such as Economics, Sociology, Law, Anthropology, Environmental Sciences, Management Sciences and Development Studies, in turn should support Public Governance with specific theoretical, meta-theoretical and applied knowledge.

Furthermore, it is proposed that the body of knowledge of Public Governance should be strengthened by tertiary disciplines that grant specific governance-related perspectives. If, for example, education and training in governance is placed under the spotlight, the discipline of Education will emerge as prominent to guide scientific enquiry. Or when the impact of HIV and Aids on society is under investigation, Health Sciences could make a significant contribution.

The respective knowledge domains of reference disciplines on primary, secondary and tertiary levels, thus jointly contribute to construct the knowledge of Public Governance.

As far as a particular disciplinary vantage point to the study of Public Governance is concerned, Karl Popper made an important contribution to the field. According to Popper, disciplines simply exist because of historical and administrative reasons and focus should rather be on the problems as such, rather than on a particular discipline to explore the problem. This view is strongly supported. **Figure 1** shows the importance of team or task research from a multi-disciplinary perspective. It also indicates that phenomena (problems) within governance should not be limited to a particular discipline. It is also clear that the circles representing disciplines are cross-cutting. This is to show that disciplines do not exist in a vacuum. Therefore inter-disciplinary collaboration is essential for the growth, and ultimately for the relevance of disciplines, especially within the scientific branch of the social sciences and the humanities.

Scientific enquiry into Public Governance should focus on the complex interactions between systems. According to Jong Jun (1996:30), the following systems are identifiable within governance:

- a government system, which entails the regulatory, administrative and organizational functioning of such a state;

- a social system, referring to the interaction of human activities within a society set-up;
- a political system demonstrated by the dynamics between groups within a society, in order to exercise control over the state;
- an economic system, indicating the interdependence of human activities that facilitate the accumulation, production and spread of wealth within the target of a nation-state.

Figure 2 below utilizes the above "systems" perspective of Young Jun and proposes a model for the knowledge construction of Public Governance. For illustrative purposes only the government system is unpacked in this depiction.
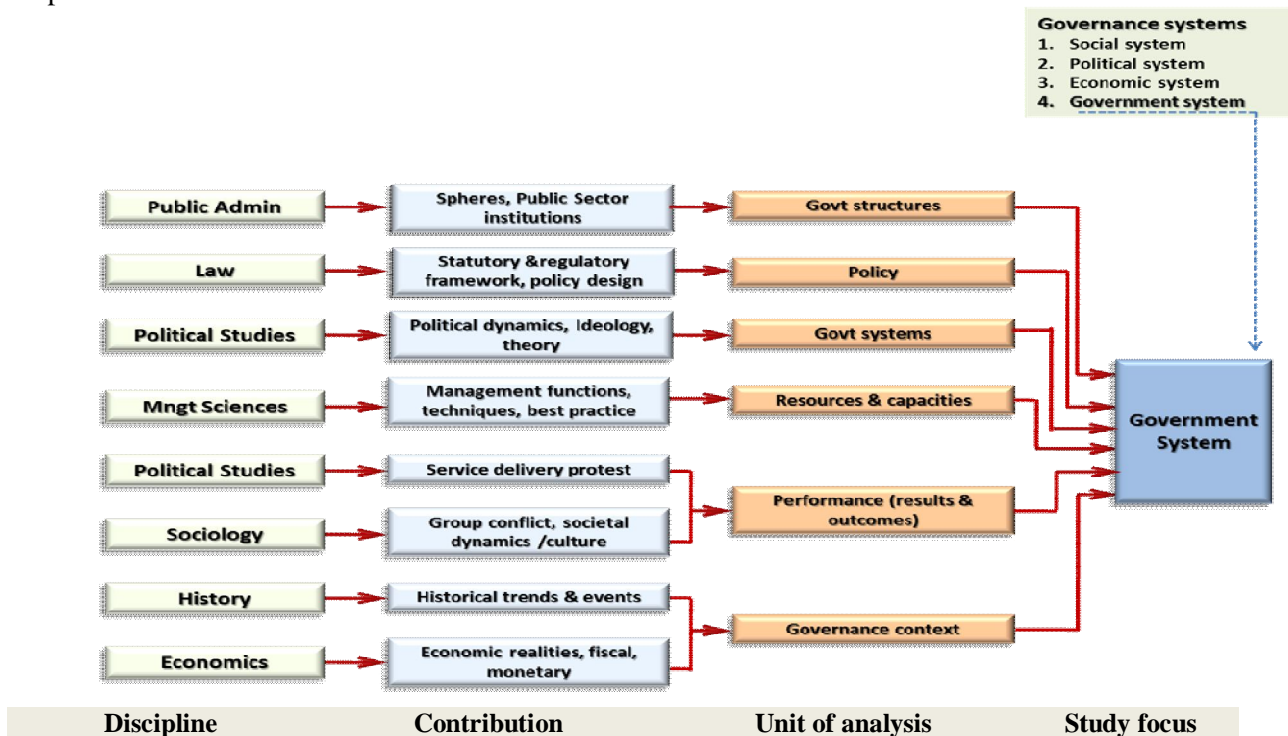

Figure 2:Towards a knowledge construction of Public Governance
Source: Author's own construction

It is proposed that when the system of government is under scrutiny (i.e. the study focus), that its various elements (units of analysis) should be identified first. Once the elements are clear, the next step should be to consider the respective domains (contributions), which could support scientific enquiry into the elements. After the respective domains are clearly laid out, the next step should be to consider the disciplines in which epistemology best suit the domains (contributions). Public Administration as discipline, for example, will assist researchers to appreciate the respective spheres and tiers of government, the dynamics of the public sector and its respective institutions. This contribution in turn will enhance understanding of government structures as a unit of analysis (element), to investigate the system of government (the study focus).

Based on this illustration, it is evident that the body of knowledge in Public Governance should transcend particular disciplines such as Public Administration. (Naturally this depends on the particular paradigmatic vantage point the theorist attached to the knowledge domain of Public Administration.) Public Governance should be enriched by adjacent disciplines to appreciate the "fullness" of governance related phenomena. It should be noted, however, that the successful application of this model depends on at least two factors:

- the capacity and expertise which are available at a particular university;
- the willingness that theorists of related disciplines show to join hands in the study of particular phenomena; to debate and theorize critically; and to exchange ideas that could give sense to the facets and angles from which governance issues can be studied.

Researchers in Public Governance should not argue strictly from a particular discipline, nor jealously guard the traditional boundaries and content thereof. They rather should transcend their disciplines to formulate new theories and produce new knowledge and insight.

Construction 2: Force-field analysis

The second proposed construction for Public Governance deals with certain phenomena that are traditionally vested in certain disciplines, but which are cross-cutting by nature regarding the role of a government in a network of actors (nationally, regionally and globally). For this purpose a Force-field construction is proposed.

As a common strategic planning technique, such a Force-field analysis is utilized to measure the extent and significance of positive and negative factors that impact on a particular course of action (i.e. forces for or against a course of action).

Only two significant forces are presented in this article, namely globalization and development. It is argued that, although there is a wide range of variables which could impact on Public Governance, all could be derived from, or are influenced by, these two forces.

Globalization

The globalization of the economy and the growing importance of trans-national political institutions have worldwide resulted in large-scale restructuring of both domestic and international economic systems. Such institutions include the European Union (EU), World Trade Organization (WTO), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Arguably the most significant consequence of globalization is that this process erodes the traditional national political authority. International forces compel national governments to take specific actions in order to address common issues. Some commentators (*see* Rhodes, 1994; Davis, 2005) refer to this phenomenon as the "hollowing out" of the state, particularly since globalization is driven mainly by market forces and not by individual governments (Friedman, 2000).

The relevant aspects are the dynamics related to global governance and its influence on the government of the day, its monetary and foreign policy, as well as its impact on national political discourse. These aspects should be incorporated into the construction of knowledge of Public Governance.

Development

It is generally accepted that the concept "development" has economic, social and environmental dimensions (*see*Barbier, 1987:102; Lehtonen, 2004:201). The economic dimension of development focuses particularly on the creation and the distribution of wealth within society. The social dimension of development is essentially about improving the general welfare of people, which includes poverty alleviation, job creation, health provision, and improving life expectancy. The environmental dimension considers especially the negative impact that the indiscriminate utilization of natural resources has on the environment. This includes, among other challenges, water, air and soil pollution, climate change, threat to food security.

Approaches to economic development emerged from paradigmatic thought detonators, such as Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, and Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* and *Capital*. More contemporary views include the following: Growth and Catch-up Theory; World Systems Theory that explores the manipulative nature of the interaction between "core" (First World Countries) and "peripheral" (Third World Countries); modernization; Human Development Theory, and Environmental Theory. Such mainstream thinking and dynamics regarding development should be incorporated within the knowledge domain of Public Governance.

It is important to note that each country's policy and resource utilization priorities are determined in terms of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (2000). In South Africa, for example, various government policies and resources are all mechanisms to achieve the outcomes specified in terms of the Millennium Development Goals. These include the annual State of the Nation address by the President, the Government's Program of Action, Vision 2030 of the National Planning Commission, the New Growth Path, provincial governments' Growth and Development Strategies, as well as municipalities' Integrated Development Plans (IDPs). Research in the field of Public Governance is incomplete without taking into account the dynamics of governments' imperatives for development. Of course, these contexts will differ vastly between so-called "developed" and "developing" countries (*see*Chhotray& Stoker, 2009: 98).

A further issue that should be considered within the context of Public Governance is the idea of a "developmental state". Planning the transformation of a state to become a developmental state is currently prevalent in many developing countries such as South Africa (*see* Castells, 1992; Low, 2004). There is a general consensus that the successful operationalization of goals that are typically linked to a developmental state is dependent on competent public managers to lead the development agenda of the state (McLennan &Munslow, 2009:19). In this regard, Box (1992:64) argues that the effectiveness and efficiency in government can be enhanced by the study of Public Administration. As such, particular levels of strategic knowledge, skills, and competencies are expected of public managers to drive the development agenda (Marwala, 2006:3; Gumede, 2007:51).

The construction of knowledge within Public Governance should make provision for the competencies and capacities (i.e. through education and training) of civil servants to operationalize developmental objectives that are in line with the state's policy goals.

Construction 3: Path Dependency Theory

The fundamental argument of Path Dependency Theory is that the current realities and trends that are observable within a country must be interpreted in terms of the history of that country (Alexander, 2001:250; Greener, 2005:63). Historical events are therefore crucial to shape contemporary societal dynamics, political thought and ultimately the system of government in a specific context. Moments in a state's history give rise to certain trends, thinking and policy direction, as well as the formation of the governmental architecture. When this theory is applied to South Africa, for example, it could be argued that certain key moments in the country's history shaped the current political direction of government. The following historical moments spring to mind:

- 1652 (the beginning of Dutch colonization of the Cape);
- 1948 (establishment of Apartheid);
- 1976 (political opposition and revolt by the youth);
- 1990 (unbanning of the African National Congress); and
- 1994 (first national democratic elections).

Events post-1994 in South Africa should thus be understood within the context of events pre-1994. As a result of British colonization, South Africa adopted the Westminster system of governance, a fact which should not be discounted in any study of Public Governance. Furthermore, there are ideological forces and political thinking present within the country, such as "Afrikaner" nationalism, conservatism, pan-Africanism, socialism, capitalism and neo-liberalism. These trends should be kept in mind when knowledge of Public Governance is constructed.

The way the production of knowledge in Public Governance is directed, is largely context specific. Theorists attached to universities with Public Administration/Public Governance offerings, should consider various factors when interpreting and processing results from research. These factors include influences brought about by the country's history, its governance architecture, its unique statutory framework, demographics and service delivery context. In this sense, Path-Dependency Theory makes a distinctive contribution to Public Governance's construction of knowledge, by incorporating the particular context and historical settings of governments in the construct.

5. Conclusion

This article aimed to facilitate the construction of knowledge, and eventually the production of knowledge, within the domain of Public Governance. It was found that the construction of knowledge should be considered as a product of trans-disciplinarity. It was further found that a wide variety of variables such as globalization, development dynamics, and historical and demographic realities, should be included in order to define the study area. Due to the evolutionary nature of the study field of Public Governance, and the fact that it is influenced by a wide range of factors and disciplinary vantage points, it is highly unlikely that total consensus will be reached on its knowledge construction. It should be accepted that debates, the dynamics of theses and antitheses, as well as on-going theorizing forms an inherent part of the social sciences in general, and of Public Governance in particular.

References

Abbott, A. (2001).Chaos of Disciplines. Chicago. IL: University Of Chicago Press.

Alexander, G. (2001).Institutions, Path Dependence, and Democratic Consolidation. Journal of Theoretical Politics, 13(3), 249-270.

Alexander, J. C. (2011).Performance and Power. Cambridge: Polity.

Augsburg, T. (2005).Becoming interdisciplinary: an introduction to interdisciplinary studies. Dubuqe, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing.

Bana, B.,&Basheka. B. C. (2011).Governance and democracy as critical pillars for successful East African regional integration. Paper presented at the East African Conference. Dar es Salaam, 19-21 December 2011.

Barbier, E. B. (1987).The concept of Sustainable Economic Development. Environmental Conservation, 14(2), 101-110.

Bath, D.,& Smith, C. (2004). Academic developers: An academic tribe claiming their territory in higher education. International Journal for Academic Development, 9(1), 9-27.

Becher, T. (1987).The disciplinary shaping of the profession. In R. C. Burton (Ed.), The Academic Profession: National, Disciplinary, and Institutional Settings (pp. 151-161). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bell, S.,&Hindmoor, A. (2009).Rethinking Governance: A Centrality of the State in Modern Society. Port Melbourne, Vic.: Cambridge University Press.

Beyer, J. M.,&Lodahl, T. M. (1976).A comparative study of patterns of influence in United States and English universities.Administrative Science Quarterly, 21, 104–129.

Borins, S. (1994). Government in Transition: A new paradigm in Public Administration. Report on the Inaugural Conference of Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management. Held on 28th August, Charlottetown, Prince Edwards Island.

Box, R. C. (1992).An examination of the debate over research in Public Administration. Public Administration Review, 52(1), 62-69.

Bratton,M., & Van de Walle, N. (1992). Towards governance in Africa: Popular demands and state responses. In G.Hyden,& M. Bratton (Eds.),Governance and Politics in Africa (pp. 263-284).Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Bruno, L. C. (1989).The Landmarks of Science. New York, NY: Facts on File.

Caiden, G. E. (1971).The Dynamics of Public Administration. Hinsdale, IL: Dryden Press.

Castells, M. (1992). Four Asian tigers with a dragon head: A comparative analysis of the state, economy and society in the Asian Pacific Rim. In R. Henderson, & J.Applebaum (Eds.) State and Development in the Asian Pacific Rim (pp. 33-70). London: Sage Publications.

Chhotray, V.,& Stoker, G. (2009). Governance Theory and Practice: A Cross-Disciplinary Approach. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

Coston, J. M. (1998).A model and typology of Government-NGO relationship. Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 27(3), 358-382.

Davis, J. (2005).Networks and globalization. Paper presented at the Global Studies Association meeting, Knoxville, TN, May, 2005.

Denhardt, R., &Denhardt, J. (2000). The new public service: Serving rather than steering. Public Administration Review, 60(6), 549-559.

Denning, P. J. (1989).Computing as a discipline.Communications of the ACM, 32(1), 9-23.

Dixon, J.,&Dogan, R. (2005). The contending perspectives on Public Management: A philosophical investigation. International Public Management Journal, 8(1), 1-14.

Doheny, M.O., Cook, C.,&Stopper, M. (1987).The Discipline of Nursing: An Introduction.(2nded.). Norwalk, CT: Appleton & Lange.

Dwivedi, O. P.,&Williams, G. (2011). Public administration: State of the discipline – a historical odyssey. In O. P.Dwivedi (Ed.).Public Administration in a Global Context: IASIA at 50 (pp. 23-40). Brussels: Bruylant.

Foucault, M. (1979). Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. New York, NY: Vintage.

Frederickson, H.G. (1997).The Spirit of Public Administration. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Frederickson, H. G. (2004). What ever happened to public administration? Governance, governance everywhere.InE.Ferlie, L. E. Lynn, & C. Pollitt (Eds.).The Oxford Handbook of Public Management (pp. 282-304). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Friedman, T. (2000). The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization. New York, NY: Anchor Books.

Gauch, H. G. (2003).Scientific Method in Practice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goldsmith, S.,&Eggers, W. D. (2004).Governing by Network: The New Shape of the Public Sector. New York, NY: Brookings Institute Press.

Grant, B. (2007). The mourning after: Academic development in a time of doubt. International Journal for Academic Development, 12(1), 35-43.

Greener, I. (2005).The potential of path dependence in Political Studies. Politics, 25(1),62-72.

Gumede, V. (2007). Is Government optimally poised to achieve set objectives and targets in time? Service Delivery Review, 5(3), 48-51.

Haque, M. (2004).Handbook of Development Policy Studies. New York, NY: Marcel Dekker.

Harland, T., &Staniforth, D. (2008). A family of strangers: The fragmented nature of academic development. Teaching in Higher Education, 13(6), 669-678.

Henry, N. (1975).Paradigms of Public Administration.Public Administration Review, 35(4), 378-386.

Henry,N. (1989).PublicAdministration and Public Affairs.(4th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Henry, N. (2010).Public Administration and Public Affairs.New York, NY: Pearson.

Hughes, O. E. (2003). Public Management and Administration: An Introduction. (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Palgrave-Macmillan.

Hyland, K. (1999). Academic attribution: Citation and the construction of disciplinary knowledge. Applied Linguistics, 20(3), 341-367.

Hyland, K.,&Bondi, M. (2006).Academic Discourse Across Disciplines. Frankfort: Peter Lang.

Jong Jun, S. (1996).Globalisation and its implications for domestic governance, policy-making, and administration. Korean Review of Public Administration, 1(1), 29-54.

Kamarack, E. C., &Nye, J. S. (2002). Governance.com: Democracy in the Information Age. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Kaufmann, D., Kraay, A.,&Zoido-Lobaton, P. (1999).Governance Matters.Policy Research Working Paper, No. 2196. October 1999. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Keen, P. G. W. (1980). MIS Research: Reference disciplines and cumulative tradition. Proceedings of the First International Conference on Information Systems.Philadelphia, PA, December 1980, pp.9-18.

Kernaghan, K. (2010).Public Administration.Canadian Encyclopedia. [Online] Available: http://thecanadianencyclopedia.com(January 7, 2013)

Kettl, D. F. (2000). The Global Public Management Revolution: A Report on the Transformation of Governance. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Kooiman, J. (2006).Governing as Governance. London: Sage.

Kuhn, T. S. (1970).The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.(2nded.).Chicago. IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Lehtonen, M. (2004). The environmental-social interface of sustainable development: capabilities, social capital, institutions. Ecological Economics, 49(2), 199-214.

Liles, D. H., Johnson, M. E., Meade, L. M.,&Underdown, D. R. (1995). Enterprise Engineering: A Discipline? Proceedings of the Society for Enterprise Engineering, Orlando, FL. June 1995.

Low, L. (2004). Developmental States: Relevancy, Redundancy or Reconfiguration. London: Nova Science Publishers.

Lynd, R. S. (1939).Knowledge for What? Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lynn, L. E., Henrich, C.,&Hill, C. J. (2001).Improving Governance: A New Logic for Empirical Research.Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Macfarlane, B.,&Hughes, G. (2009). Turning teachers into academics? The role of educational development in fostering synergy between teaching and research.Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 46(1), 5-14.

Marwala, T. (2006).Skills necessary for the advancement of South Africa.Umrabulo, 26, 60-61.

McLaughlin, K., Osborne, S.,&Ferlie, E. (2002). New Public Management: Current Trends and Future Prospects. London: Routledge.

McLennan, A., &Munslow, B. (2009).The Politics of Service Delivery. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Menzel, D.,&White, H. (2011).The State of Public Administration: Issues, Challenges and Opportunity. New York. NY: M. E. Sharpe.

Miller, D. Y.,&Dunn, W. N. (2006).A Critical Theory of New Public Management. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh.

Nicolescu, B. (2005).Towards Transdisciplinary Education and Learning. Paper prepared fora conference on Science and Religion: Global Perspectives, June 4-8, 2005. Philadelphia, PA: Metanexus Institute [Online] www.metanexus.net. (December 15, 2012)

OECD and World Bank. (2008).Managing for Development Results Source Book. Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC) and World Bank.(3rded.). New York, NY: World Bank.

Osborne, D.,&Gaebler, T. A. (1992). Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector. New York, NY: Addison-Wesley.

Osborne, S. (2010).The New Public Governance. New York, NY: Routledge.

Perri, L., Seltzer, D. K., &Stoker, G. (2002).Towards Holistic Governance: The New Reform Agenda. Houndmills, UK: Palgrave.

Peter, A. (2008).Conference on New Public Management and the quality of government. Paper presented on New Public Management and the Quality of Government: Coping with the New Political Governance in Canada. SOG and the Quality of Government Institute, Sweden: University of Gothenburg, 13-15 November 2008:14.

Pfeffer, J.,&Salancik, G. (1978).The External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Pierre, J. (2000). Debating Governance: Authority, Steering and Democracy. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Plumptre, T. W. (1991).Management in Government.(5thed.).The Institute for Research on Public Policy: Nova Scotia.

Pohl, C.,&Hirsch-Hadorn, G. (2007).Principles for Designing Transdisciplinary Research.München: Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences.

Pollitt, C. (1993).Managerialism and the Public Services: The Anglo-American Experience. Oxford: Blackwell.

Popper, K. R. (1972).Objective Knowledge, An evolutionary approach. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Ranney, A. (1971).The Governing of Men.(3rded.). New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

Rhodes, R. A. W. (1994). The hollowing out of the state: The changing nature of the state in Britain. Political Quarterly, 65(2), 138-151.

Salmons, J.,&Wilson, L. (2007).Crossing a Line: An Interdisciplinary conversation about working across disciplines. Webinar held on 23 Aug 2007 hosted by OSSIA and Vision2Lead. [Online]http://www.vision2lead.com (May 5, 2013)

Salvendy, G. (1982).Handbook of Industrial Engineering. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Snodgrass, A. (1987).An Archaeology of Greece: The Present State and Future Scope of a Discipline. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Stoop, L. C. A., &Grabe, J. J. (1993). Public sector productivity in the RSA: A case of decentralization. Journal of Public Administration, 28(1), 23-35.

United National Development Group (UNDG) (2010). Results-based Management Handbook: Strengthening RBM harmonization for improved development results. Draft Version 24 March 2010. New York, NY: UN.

Van der Waldt, G. (2004).Managing Performance in the Public Sector: Concepts, Considerations and Challenges.Kenwyn: Juta.

Van der Waldt, G. (2007). Public Management and Disaster Risk Reduction: Potential interdisciplinary contributions. Jàmbá. Journal of the African Centre for Disaster Studies, 2(1), 14-27.

Van Kersbergen, K.,&Van Waarden, F. (2004). Governance' as a bridge between disciplines: Cross disciplinary inspiration regarding shifts in governance and problems of governance ability, accountability and legitimacy. European Journal of Political Research, 43, 143-171.

Wiesmann, U., Hirsch, G., Hoffmann-Riem, H., Biber-Klemm, S., Grossenbacher-Mansuy, W., Joye, D., Pohl, C.,&Zemp, E. (2008).Handbook of Transdisciplinary Research. London: Springer.

Wood, J.,&Dupont, B. (2006).Democracy, Society and the Governance of Security. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.