

Democracy and administrative policy: contrasting elements of New Public Management (NPM) and post-NPM

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This article presents an analytical platform for discussing and analyzing administrative reforms in terms of democracy. First, we present the democratic theory positions represented by output democracy and input democracy. These two positions are used to classify different types of reform. The second explanatory approach on democracy and reforms is transformative, and it applies a mixture of external features, domestic administrative culture, and polity features to understand variations in the democratic aspects of public sector reforms. Central issues are whether these reforms can be seen as alternatives or whether they complement each other in terms of layering processes. Third, we take a broad overview of New Public Management (NPM) and post-NPM reforms and carry out an in-depth analysis of a new administrative policy report by the Norwegian centre-left government. Finally, we discuss briefly the broader comparative implications of our findings.

Keywords: NPM; post-NPM; administrative policy; administrative reform; whole-of-government; democracy

Introduction¹

An important aspect of administrative reform is its implications for representative democracy (Lægreid and Roness, 1999; Suleiman, 2003). The capacity of political leaders to govern on behalf of the people and the effects of administrative reform on political governance are particularly relevant. Public reforms in recent decades reflect major changes in administrative policies in different countries (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004). They have chiefly been seen as technically oriented reforms intended to change the organizational design of the public sector and rarely focus on more general questions of democracy. It is the latter we would like to discuss in this article.

One aim of the article is to develop an analytical platform for discussing and analyzing reforms and new features of administrative policy in terms of democracy.

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¹ This is a revised version of a paper presented at the EGPA Annual Conference ‘The Public Service: Public Service Delivery in the Information Age’, Study Group VI Governance of Public Sector Organizations, Malta, 2–5 September 2009.

This platform consists of two elements. First, we will present the fundamental positions of democratic theory. Following Peters' (2008) distinction between input and output democracy, we will contrast the traditional model of representative democracy, with its input orientation, with individual-economic and pluralist models associated with an output perspective. Developments around the world appear to indicate a shift in emphasis from input to output democracy. These two positions in democratic theory are used to classify or categorize different types of reform, more specifically New Public Management (NPM) and post-NPM reforms.

The second theoretical approach is a transformative one, which addresses a mixture of external features, domestic administrative culture, and polity features to understand variations in the democratic aspects of public reforms (Christensen and Læg Reid, 2007a). This analytical framework adds value not only by defining different contexts and factors influencing the processes, content, and effects of public reforms but also by providing insights into their complex dynamics. Thus, the transformative approach has a more explanatory purpose, more broadly related to the major reform waves and also to specific reform in Norway, used as an illustrative example.

The second aim is to use these two theoretical approaches to describe and explain the democratic features of NPM and post-NPM reforms. We provide a broad overview of such reforms. NPM reforms are chiefly about structural devolution, horizontal specialization, market and management principles, and efficiency, while post-NPM reforms focus more on central capacity and control, coordination within and between sectors, and value-based management (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004; Christensen and Læg Reid, 2007a). However, neither of these two reform waves explicitly addresses the democratic aspects of political-administrative systems and civil service activities. One trend we will discuss is the shift from input democracy in the pre-NPM era to output democracy in the NPM reforms and possibly back toward input democracy again in post-NPM.

These issues are then addressed by a more in-depth analysis of a new administrative policy report by the Norwegian center-left government entitled *An Administration for Democracy and Community*. The focus is on how this policy document handles complex democratic values in the public sector and how it links these values to different structural models, modes of governance, and coordination features. We ask what the report means for democracy, how it links democratic values to other public sector values, and whether this relationship is unambiguous or complex. We also discuss whether the report, drafted in the complex water between the two reform waves, tries to develop a new notion of democracy or whether it just re-labels old norms and values.

Third, we revisit the transformative approach, analyzing the development from NPM to post-NPM reforms in general as well as whether this specific policy document is dominated by the post-NPM ideas that have replaced NPM, or whether it represents a sedimentation process in which new ideas are added to previous ones to produce a more complex and ambiguous administrative policy.

We also use the transformative approach to show how this administrative policy document is the result of a complex mix of environmental events and pressures, cultural norms, and structural factors. Fourth, we discuss briefly the broader implications of our analysis.

A theoretical platform

Descriptive theory: classifying reforms in terms of basic democracy perspectives

In discussing the connection between democracy and bureaucracy, Peters (2008) sees these as complementary. He draws a distinction between input democracy and output democracy, defining the former as the election channel and the latter as a more direct connection between individual/collective actors and the public bureaucracy. He asserts that the balance has shifted in favor of output democracy. This is due to decreasing participation in the election channel and more direct contact between the public administration and the public resulting from modern reforms based on devolution, fragmentation, and increased user orientation.

This distinction is also closely linked to Fritz Scharpf's (1999) distinction between input legitimacy and output legitimacy. The former refers to legitimation of political choices by reflecting the 'will of the people'. The latter sees legitimation of choices as depending on results, performance, and effectiveness. His argument is that both types of legitimation are equally essential in a democracy. In light of this input–output democracy, NPM reforms can be seen as a shift from a type of democracy that based the legitimacy of decisions on processes, representativeness, and legality to one where greater concern about the effective implementation of decisions features. It represented a shift away from the input side of the political system to the throughput (e.g. management contracts) and the output side (service delivery, performance targets) (Easton, 1965).

The input-oriented democratic model is the basic indirect democracy model, here referred to as the collectivist model (Aberbach and Christensen, 2003). It is built on the notion that government is a homogeneous and monolithic entity (Allison, 1971). The sovereign people have a common interest in a collective state and delegate authority to politicians and civil servants, so that collective interests can be fulfilled (Olsen, 1988). It is a centralized model where political and administrative leaders have substantial power (Hood, 1998), and they consciously design the state apparatus to achieve collective goals.

The collectivist model can be seen as reinforcing core structural and cultural elements, meaning that the structural order works in harmony with integral features of the culture or main institutional arrangements (Christensen and Peters, 1999). Political leaders attend to and act in accordance with collectivist responsibilities and obligations, embodied in a common heritage, purpose, and future destiny (March and Olsen, 1989). Civil servants are pre-socialized through higher

education, internalize, and share main institutional norms and values with political leaders, and represent the perceived will of the public (Lægreid and Olsen, 1978). The general public share collective institutional norms and values and learn how to behave as good citizens.

The output model, as defined by Peters (2008), is the second role of the bureaucracy. Alongside its neutral role in indirect democracy, it maintains an important set of contacts with society, either with individual or organized interests. The output model is not only about direct influence and control by the bureaucracy but also about transparency, information, and legitimacy. It focuses more on managerial accountability and ex post judgment of performance, and is often rather particularistic and fragmented. It can be seen as challenging and undermining the input model, but potentially also as supplementing and strengthening it via more direct democracy (Aberbach and Christensen, 2005).

The output model actually seems to encompass two models of democracy: the pluralist model and the individual-economic model. The pluralist model is based on the notion that the government apparatus is heterogeneous, with different power centers, institutions, and levels related to different interests (Allison, 1971). The environment of government is also heterogeneous, and the bureaucracy must therefore attend to and represent a plurality of societal interests and groups (March and Olsen, 1983). Decision-making processes in a pluralist state are about a tug-of-war between diverse interests, meaning that public policy is constantly changing. Decisions in a heterogeneous setting of this kind can be reached via compromises, winning coalitions or quasi-resolution of conflicts and sequential attention to goals (Cyert and March, 1963). In such a model, politicians are perceived as negotiators, mediators, and facilitators, trying to balance many interests and furthering some. Central actors are either civil servants representing specialized government units or interest groups outside the government.

Even though the individual economic model includes elements of a traditional model of competition democracy, it can be seen chiefly as offering a generic view of actors based on economic theories and private-sector management ideas said to have relevance in the public sector, despite differences in main purposes, structure, tasks, and culture (Allison, 1983; Aberbach and Christensen, 2003). The model is heterogeneous concerning economic thinking and the structural solutions recommended, as shown by Boston *et al.* (1996) in reference to reforms in New Zealand. The model has no clear overall understanding of democracy and the role of the bureaucracy in the political system. Its chief focus is running the civil service efficiently, employing the principles of devolution, clear roles, contracts, and the market (Olsen, 1988). Its view of executive politicians and administrative leaders is complex and inconsistent (Self, 2000; Christensen and Lægreid, 2001). The model represents a narrower customer or consumer role in which the main emphasis is on individual rights and choices. The new output role in this model is mainly about service delivery and direct contact with the civil service, and may be seen as non-political or even anti-political (Frederickson, 1996).

The input and output models outlined potentially represent both contrasting and supplementary models. We will first look at how they are represented in the two major reform waves – NPM and post-NPM reforms – and then see how they are reflected in the White Paper on administrative policy. First, we present our explanatory approach.

Explanatory theory: a transformative approach – complex contexts

This approach sees public-sector reforms and the ability of the political-administrative leadership to design and redesign the system as contingent on three sets of contexts (Christensen and Læg Reid, 2007a). First, the actions of the leadership can be constrained by *environmental factors*. The technical environment, be it external factors like globalization or the financial crisis or internal economic or technological pressures, may have an important influence on reforms and administrative policy. The institutional environment, however, may exert ideological pressures as international and national concept entrepreneurs try to promote new ideologies, ideas, concepts, and myths about how to organize the public sector (see Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Certain ideas become ‘taken-for-granted’ as they are adopted and promoted by dominant professions, consulting firms, or international and national commercial actors. In the analysis of the White Paper, we ask whether its content and primarily its democratic profile reflect pressure from or events in the environment.

The second context is related to *cultural processes*. Public organizations evolve gradually by adapting to internal and external pressure. Through institutionalization they develop distinct cultural features represented by their informal norms and values (Selznick, 1957). Institutionalization processes are related to path-dependency, that is, the norms and values that characterized the organization when it was established will influence and constrain its further development (Krasner, 1988). When reforms are introduced, cultural sensitivity and compatibility are important. Reforms that are culturally compatible will be adapted and implemented easily, while incompatible reforms will be bounced back or adopted only partially (Brunsson and Olsen, 1993). In analyzing the White Paper, we discuss whether there is a changing balance between different cultural norms and values displayed.

The third set of contextual factors relates to the *formal structures* in political-administrative systems like constitutions, electoral and representational system, or whether the civil service is homogeneous or heterogeneous (Weaver and Rockman, 1993). Certain combinations of structural factors offer better pre-conditions for deciding on and implementing reform. Westminster systems, for example, with their ‘elective dictatorships’ allow the winning party in principle to implement radical reforms if it so chooses (Hood, 1996; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004). In systems with multiple parties, where there are often coalition governments, or systems with a lot of checks and balances, like the United States,

the situation is very different. In the analysis of the White Paper, we ask whether the formal structure and power relations are changing in the Norwegian political-administrative system, and participate in explaining the democratic profile of the paper.

Taken together, these three sets of constraining factors may at one extreme be rather favorable toward modern reforms, as studies of NPM have shown (Christensen and Læg Reid, 2001; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004). Countries facing economic crises, strong normative pressure from international organizations, and which have an accommodating culture and 'elective dictatorships' may adopt reforms most easily. Other countries might lag behind because of less external pressure, less accommodating cultures, and more problematic structural pre-conditions. Between these extremes are many other variants conditioned by the complex way that these main sets of factors interact.

Depending on the contexts outlined, the civil service in a given country may develop in several different ways. One scenario is a more or less wholesale adoption of NPM in place of the old public administration followed by a kind of pendulum swing back toward some main norms and values of the old public administrations through post-NPM reforms in the late 1990s (Christensen and Læg Reid, 2007b). Another is the preservation of some aspects of the old public administration and deinstitutionalization of others. Only certain aspects of NPM are implemented while post-NPM becomes only partially institutionalized leading to a hybrid structure and culture containing elements of the old public administration, NPM, and post-NPM, in a process of layering or sedimentation (Thelen and Mahoney, 2009).

We will use the transformative approach to analyze the development from NPM toward post-NPM reforms and also why the White Paper on administrative policy handles democracy questions in a certain way. How may the dynamic relationship between the environmental factors, cultural norms, and polity features participate in explaining the democratic content and balance of the paper? We also ask whether there is evidence of a layering process concerning democratic values when compared with earlier administrative policy papers and reports (Thelen and Mahoney, 2009).

NPM and post-NPM reforms – main features and democratic elements

NPM – toward output democracy

When NPM was introduced in the early 1980s, it sought primarily to address what was perceived as government inefficiency, the lack of participation opportunities for the public and the decreasing legitimacy of the public sector. NPM was built on the individual-economic model outlined above. This implies an ideological dominance of economic norms and their subordination to many other traditionally legitimate norms and values, such as broader political concerns, sector

policy goals, professional expertise, various rights and rules, and the interests of societal groups (Boston *et al.*, 1996; Nagel, 1997). NPM is essentially an idea of generic management because it argues that all management faces similar challenges, and hence should be approached in similar ways (Peters and Pierre, 1998). The focus here is whether NPM challenges democracy, popular sovereignty, and the political-democratic control of systems, and what its implications are for them.

There is a tension in NPM between the need for greater managerial discretion and the need for more accountability (Thomas, 1998). Here a distinction can be drawn between political accountability, often labeled political responsibility, and managerial accountability (Day and Klein, 1987). The former is about those with delegated authority being answerable for their actions to the people and involves dialog and debate about what should be done. Political accountability is designed to make political leaders systematically responsive to popular wishes (Goodin, 2000). Managerial accountability is a more neutral, technical exercise involving bookkeeping and evaluations of whether tasks are being performed efficiently and effectively (Gregory, 2001). It is about making those with delegated authority answerable for carrying out agreed tasks according to agreed performance criteria. NPM focuses primarily on strengthening managerial accountability, based on output, competition, transparency, and contractual relations, and thus represents a departure from old school public administration, where various forms of accountability were based on input processes and procedures, hierarchical control, legality, trust, and cultural traditions (Gregory, 2001; Christensen and Lægreid, 2002). It is important to recognize the various dimensions of accountability, the complex context of public accountability, and the multiple overlapping accountability relations of administrative reform (Day and Klein, 1987; Romzek, 2000; Behn, 2001).

The NPM model is also a customer-driven approach, where the public interest is defined by bottom-up processes that permit each agency and its clients potentially to determine the content of policy (Peters, 1998). It is preoccupied with the state at the street level and sees the centralized state as overloaded and inefficient at the central level (Boston *et al.*, 1996; Gustafsson and Svensson, 1999). What it lacks is a perspective on the relationship between the influence of voters or citizens on politicians through the election channel, on the one hand, and their more direct influence on public bodies as clients and consumers on the other.

Some elements of NPM do potentially present an alternative view of democracy, a democracy that is directly oriented to the individual and that gives citizens enhanced freedom of choice over public services (Christensen and Lægreid, 2001). However, it does not answer the question of how atomized actors making choices in a market can contribute to creating a stable and responsible democratic system. Moreover, their potential to influence the provision and quality of services is ambiguous and debatable, and the issues of discriminating 'creaming' and social segregation might be highly relevant (Blomqvist and Rothstein, 2000).

It could be argued that seen from the perspective of popular sovereignty, the most important part of the NPM model is not that concerned with democracy but

that concerned with efficiency, quality, and direct influence on public services. This might be labeled as the ‘empowering the people’ aspect (Aberbach and Rockman, 1999). In theory, individual participation through competition and the market should produce efficient, high-quality services. The model emphasizes output democracy and downplays input democracy (Peters, 2008).

In a customer-oriented system, providing desired services to one set of clients may drain resources from other programs (Fountain, 2001). And there is the problem of democratic accountability. Political officials are less able to oversee public bureaucracies and to impose sanctions when they behave in a manner not in keeping with the law. The pressure to be responsive to service consumers tends to run counter to the government’s obligation to be accountable to the public at large through its elected representatives, so there is a potential clash between input and output democracy. This may weaken responsibility, commitment, political equality, and accountability even if some aspects of service are improved (Thompson and Riccucci, 1998).

Post-NPM – more input-oriented democracy again?

In contrast to the NPM reforms, a new generation of reforms initially labeled ‘joined-up government’ (JUG) (Pollitt, 2003) and later known as ‘whole-of-government’ (WG) – here labeled post-NPM reforms – was launched in the late 1990s (Christensen and Læg Reid, 2007b). They sought to apply a more holistic strategy, using insights from the other social sciences, rather than just economics (Bogdanor, 2005). The new reform efforts can be seen as resulting from a combination of negative feedback, the undermining of political control, and an increased emphasis on insecurities in the most radical NPM countries such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia (Perri 6, 2005). As a response to the increased fragmentation caused by NPM, these countries adopted coordination and integration strategies. The slogans ‘joined-up-government’ and ‘whole-of-government’ provided new labels for the old doctrine of coordination in public administration (Hood, 2005). In addition to the issue of coordination, the problem of integration was the main concern behind these reform initiatives (Mulgan, 2005).

The concept of JUG was first introduced by the Blair government in 1997, and the main aim was to get a better grip on the ‘wicked’ problems and issues reaching across sectors, administrative levels, and policy areas (Richards and Smith, 2006). JUG was presented as the opposite of ‘departmentalism’, tunnel vision, and ‘vertical silos’. The overlap with the WG concept is obvious. The *Connecting Government Report* defines WG in the Australian Public Service as: ‘WG denotes public services agencies working across portfolio boundaries to achieve a shared goal and an integrated government response to particular issues’. WG activities may span any or all levels of government and also involve groups outside government. Like NPM, the WG concept does not represent a coherent set of ideas and tools, and can best be seen as an umbrella term describing a group of responses to the problem of increased

fragmentation in the public sector and public services, and a wish to increase integration, coordination, and capacity (see Ling, 2002).

Post-NPM reforms have some of the same features as the main input democracy model presented. Like the latter, they attend primarily to the electoral channel and in doing so stress the need for more centralization and coordination to cope with the challenges of modern society. One reason for this is partly that political executives believe that they have lost the capacity to handle wicked societal problems that straddle several sectors. Another reason for recentralization and reintegration is that NPM seems to have problems delivering on efficiency at both the macro and the micro level. Added to this, an increasingly insecure world with its terrorism, pandemics, and tsunamis (Christensen and Lægveid, 2007b) has enhanced the legitimacy of increased control and coordination. Just like the collectivistic model, post-NPM tries to reinforce control and coordination by combining structural and cultural elements. The value-based management concept is meant to create a more common cultural understanding of collective goals and norms, in order to counter the specialization and fragmentation of NPM, which is also related to sub-cultures and more narrow cultural foci (Halligan, 2007).

However, post-NPM is not all about returning to ‘old public administration’ and the collectivist model. Its notion of governance is more broadly defined than that, for it entails reaching out to society, enabling individual and organized private actors in civil society to be better informed about public policy and participate in making policy more representative and its implementation – all elements taken from output models. JUG, as exemplified in the United Kingdom, is one example. The use of public–private partnerships and networks, supporting non-profit organizations, and establishing user forums and user surveys all point in this direction.

We have drawn a rather sharp distinction between NPM and post-NPM for analytical-pedagogical purposes. In reality, reform waves like this will have different and somewhat overlapping elements; so we stress that the reforms balanced centralizing/coordinative and decentralizing/fragmenting elements in different ways. New Steps in the United Kingdom was sold as devolution, but the Next Steps’ reorganization also had controlling elements (Perri 6, 2005; Richards and Smith, 2006). In addition, the Blair’s joined-up governance and Third Way exercises of the 1990s had symbolic elements that were difficult to implement as intended.

When analyzing the White Paper on administrative policy in Norway, we will discuss which NPM and post-NPM elements it contains. Does it contain more post-NPM and fewer NPM elements than earlier administrative policy papers? How is the paper’s perspective on democracy and administrative policy related to the two reform waves?

The Norwegian White Paper – a rebalancing of democratic values?

The current Red-Green government’s 2009 White Paper on administrative policy (St.meld.nr.19 (2008, 2009)) is entitled *An Administration for Democracy*

and Community. The main aim of the policy is said to be a combination of political control, broad participation, and using resources in an environmentally conscious and efficient way. It lists six more specific aims:

- (1) Developing a basis for political control, including building on democratic values and having the civil service help the government achieve political goals by preparing and implementing decisions on a professional basis. Good steering and organization are important and should include unambiguous accountability relationships, a sensible division of tasks, and balancing different aims and interests. Combining more participation and more emphasis on higher priorities makes demands on political control larger. A coordinated use of means is also mentioned.
- (2) Broad participation through a transparent and open civil service, easy access to information, broad user rights, and user influence on solutions.
- (3) An environmentally conscious civil service built on ethical standards and energy efficiency.
- (4) Efficiency in the civil service, including using resources well, so as to fulfill more political aims. It also advocates ICT solutions that facilitate connections to citizens and business, and unambiguous rules.
- (5) A competent and committed administrative staff, with an emphasis on recruiting, developing, and retaining competence, and on civil servants participating in and influencing their working environment.
- (6) Leaders who direct and motivate performance in an intelligent and result-oriented way in the interest of the collectivity, while also focusing on local responsibility.

The paper also outlines the value basis of the civil service, which consists of four sets of values. First, democratic values. These are twofold, namely that the civil service should attend to political signals and be loyal toward the minister, the cabinet, and the parliament. At the same time, it should also be open to citizens and facilitate their participation and influence. Second, the rule of law and ensuring peoples' formal rights and obligations. Third, professional competence and integrity in the civil service. Fourth, efficient use of resources.

The paper says the central civil service in Norway has changed and is now less focused on service provision (having moved this out to state-owned companies) and more on enacting its decision-making authority. It now has a greater variety of organizational forms, and subordinate levels and institutions have more autonomy. It has become both more specialized (e.g. by 'role purification' in the regulatory agencies) and less specialized through mergers. The demography of the civil service has also changed, with more female staff at all levels.

The paper also underlines that administrative policy is about balancing different considerations (see Olsen, 1988). One is the relationship between the ministry and subordinate levels and institutions more generally and how much professional leeway subordinate units should have. Another related issue is which tasks should

be organized in ordinary administrative bodies and under the authority of the minister, and which tasks should be located in units with more professional and financial autonomy. In this respect, the paper largely repeats the main views expressed in a comprehensive public report published in 1989 (NOU, 1989: 5), which stressed the use of different forms for different types of tasks. The third issue concerns the balance between user orientation, local autonomy, and variation on the one hand, and equal treatment, common standards, and superior political control on the other. The fourth addresses the balance between professional competence and efficiency. Here the main concern is reconciling the need for specialized knowledge and organizational specialization with holistic and coordinated policies.

The paper also outlines several challenges for future administrative policy. One is the dilemma of adapting the civil service to a more differentiated, individualized, and fragmented society, while maintaining standardization. Another is using an ever more specialized 'knowledge-society' to develop collective solutions, which is seen as a precondition for efficiency and achieving public goals.

So does this White Paper have a distinct profile distinguishing it from other similar documents on administrative policy? The two main words in the title of the paper – democracy and community – are rather unusual, as the modern reform programs and reports mentioned have tended to emphasize efficiency and service orientation. Whether this signals a new course of action is another question, and our main interpretation is that while the paper contains a message about rebalancing norms and values, this message is an ambiguous one.

The main story about democracy in the White Paper seems to be that there should be more centralization, more central control of subordinate bodies, and more coordination, both intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral elements of a traditional collective democracy model as presented in the parliamentary chain or input model. The emphasis on efficiency is also weaker compared with earlier administrative policy papers and reports, and the perspective now is that efficiency is furthered through control and coordination. The paper also stresses that the financial crisis indicates that specialization and market solutions are problematic and that collective solutions are good for the private sector as well.

However, there is another major aspect of the way democracy is defined in the paper that potentially makes it even more complex, hybrid, and inconsistent. It stresses that democracy involves peoples' participation in government outside the election channel through a direct connection with the civil service. What is interesting about this way of thinking is that the focus is more on citizens' participation in general as opposed to the user participation always cited in the NPM rhetoric, and it is not entirely clear what is meant by this type of participation. While the paper does mention user participation, corporative features in general, and union participation in the civil service, these might be seen as subordinate to the broader participatory view. Democracy is related to citizens playing a role in the solution of tasks and their additional influencing on decision-making via this

direct channel to the civil service. It asserts that in addition to their role as users, people should be able to have greater influence over how society works, helped by an open civil service providing them information. However, it also says that those most affected by government services and decisions should have a say in the decision-making process, which is a user-oriented element.

Therefore, what does this second democratic element add up to? The paper's perspective is pluralistic in that it perceives this form of democracy as supplementing the election channel; but it does not say much about balancing the two. It also seems to take a pluralistic view of the direct democratic channel, seeing a dual role for people as citizens as well as users. But here, too, it fails to specify how to balance the roles of individual and private organizational actors in influencing the government.

The more general perspective on democracy in the paper is rather complex and somewhat ambiguous. One major element is definitely the more collective and election-oriented notion of delegating popular sovereignty to the political executive and its apparatus, the civil service. Without actually saying that the shift toward more devolution, more specialization, and more market orientation has been a failure, it emphasizes the need for more central control and coordination. This brings input-orientated democratic elements back in and de-emphasizes output elements, particularly individual-economic ones.

This perspective is challenged by the paper's assertion that people need to participate in government through direct contact with the civil service and not just through the electoral channel, and, in relation to that, the need for openness, information, and representativeness in the civil service. This is a general perspective emphasizing individual over collective elements and the role of citizens over that of users. The White Paper provides little indication of how this additional democratic element should be organized, let alone what its relative importance should be compared with the election channel. Should the election channel still be dominant and this alternative, direct channel to the civil service be more a source of transparency and information designed to secure support and legitimacy for indirect democracy? Or, should the balance between the two change to the detriment of the election channel?

How about elements from NPM and post-NPM in the White Paper? It does not signal any major change in administrative policy. It states that the civil service must renew itself, but also that basic norms and values should remain stable and that renewal should be related to collaboration in the traditional tri-partite relationship between government, employers, and employees. Overall, there are fewer NPM elements than in earlier administrative policy papers and reports. One obvious NPM element emphasized is management by objectives and results (MBOR), but it is related more to coordinating the use of different means, and the need for qualitative measures is underlined. It also stresses that MBOR and rule steering do not conflict with but complement one another. The focus on user participation, even if modified and weaker, is also typical of NPM, as is the emphasis on transparency.

One major post-NPM element is the view that the major challenges in contemporary society demand that more societal sectors work together. The paper asserts that such challenges, whether national or international, create the need for new collaborative forms and competence. A post-NPM perspective is also evident in the statement that decisions further down the hierarchy must be clearly anchored in the central level. Post-NPM concerns are also obvious in the requirement that increased variety must be met by standardization, more holistic competences developed, and that services should be more seamless across sectors and have clearer over-riding priorities. The emphasis on ethical guidelines, platforms for leadership, and strengthening the public ethos are also clear post-NPM elements. The previous strong market orientation and focus on competition are criticized for producing fragmentation and the disintegration of the civil service. The paper also calls for an administrative policy that strengthens democratic values and stresses the need for more political control of resources and institutions.

Summing up, the White Paper signals a reform break more than a new reform wave. It presents a hybrid and multidimensional model. It may be seen as inspired by the British 'third way' ideas that combine core NPM elements with discourses of partnership, community, participation, and collaboration (Ashworth *et al.*, 2009). What we see is a coexistence of different institutional logics, such as customer orientation, professionalism, markets, and corporative participation. The multifunctional character of public administration is underlined. The paper represents a combination of input and output democracy features. While still recognizing the importance of output legitimacy, it brings input legitimacy back into the administrative reform discourse. Even if the minister in charge of the paper declared that she wanted to throw NPM into the garbage can, NPM is not rejected but played down. The document represents a path-adjustment from market solutions and efficiency towards more emphasis on political steering, democracy, and community. In a comparative perspective the paper can be placed on the trajectory of the 'modernization agenda' for public services launched by the Labour government in the United Kingdom in 1997, which tried to combine different institutional logics and add 'JUG' issues to the more fundamental elements of NPM, later pursued in the 'WG' initiatives in Australia and elsewhere. The paper confirms these international tracks of different dominating logics supplementing rather than replacing each other. It also illustrates another comparative feature of administrative reform, that the domestic historical-institutional features constrain and enable the contemporary administrative policy.

There is no obvious pendulum swing away from NPM, which is still very much alive and kicking, but more restrained. Old NPM reforms are not reversed, but no new ones are launched either, making them less dominant. The Nordic model of a cooperative policy style between the government and interest organizations is underlined. The result is increased complexity as a result of a layering or sedimentation process. The White Paper is a collection of general ideas rather than recipes for practice or specific reform measures.

Understanding reforms: a transformative approach revisited

How is the development and combining of NPM and post-NPM reforms related to the dynamics of the explanatory factors of the transformative approach? NPM as a reform wave was rather compatible with the traditional cultures of Anglo-American countries, which was why reforms fell on more fertile ground there than in, say, Continental-European and Scandinavian countries. These were more reluctant reformers because of less cultural compatibility (Hood, 1996). As post-NPM reforms emerge, the interesting question of whether these have a path-dependency related to the old administrative systems or to NPM arises. Some studies construe post-NPM reforms as a return to the cultural norms and values of the traditional Weberian and centralized system, while others emphasize that NPM has created a new trajectory that makes it difficult to return to the 'good old days' – that is, NPM has a constraining effect on post-NPM reforms (Christensen and Læg Reid, 2007b).

International reform trends like NPM and post-NPM have global potential, but they can also be transformed in the diffusion process when they encounter national contexts, so that they are not only seen as myths with no behavioral consequences (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Røvik, 2002). The main reforms ideas, solutions, methods of implementation, and practice, as well as effects from outside, change when they encounter different political-administrative and historical-cultural contexts. Such transformations may reflect a lack of compatibility between reform content and national institutional norms and values (Brunsson and Olsen, 1993). A kind of 'editing' of reform ideas occurs as they are implemented and come face to face with existing national ideas and practice (Røvik, 1996; Sahlin-Andersson, 1996), or else a reform 'virus' manages to penetrate a country's administration only after a certain period of time (March and Olsen, 1983; Røvik, 2002).

Reforms are constrained by structural, cultural, and environmental features but can also strike back and change such features. Thus, reforming the public administration is a twofold process where it is important to stress the dubiety of making a clear distinction between reforms and their determinants (cf. Jacobsson *et al.*, 2004). National administrations have the potential to transform reform ideas in widely different ways. Some of these translations may be regarded as strategic adaptations (Oliver, 1991), others as determined by the situation or the process, while still others may be seen as an expression of how robust existing administrations are. The translation of post-NPM reforms is subject to different approaches in different countries and policy areas, as was NPM.

Taking the latest administrative policy program from the Norwegian government as an illustration, this can be seen as a product of different driving forces and their interactions as described by the transformative approach (Christensen and Læg Reid, 2007a). First, the political-administrative context is crucial for understanding the content of the White Paper. The electoral campaign of the parties of

the incoming center-left government was based largely on an anti-NPM ticket. The civil service unions were a strong supporting partner in the campaign and represented a clear anti-NPM position. The electoral campaign was successful, and for the first time in 20 years Norway had a majority government in 2005. For the first time, the Labour party joined with other parties to form a winning coalition, and for the first time the Socialist-Left Party came to power. This party was given the Ministry for Government Administration and Reform, responsible for the White Paper. Given this background, the government might have been expected to come up with a clear anti-NPM administrative program quickly. But, this did not happen. Only toward the end of its 4-year term did the government present its program, and it did not live up to the promises of the electoral campaign. The White Paper in its rebalancing and complexity reflects both a regime change and tensions in the new coalition, with the Labour Party trying to limit the undermining of NPM and the Socialist Party trying to strengthen post-NPM and input democracy.

In Norway, there are strong sector ministries and weak overarching ministries. Thus, most reforms are conducted by the line ministries, while the Ministry for Government Administration and Reform is a weak ministry with few opportunities to instruct other ministries on administrative reforms. Its horizontal coordinating power is rather weak. Whenever the ministry has tried to launch its own administrative policy, it has been met with skepticism from the sector ministries, which want to control their own reform processes. Thus reform programs, such as that represented by the White Paper, tend to become vague compromises focusing on some non-binding general values and principles rather than specific, concrete, and operationalized programs.

Norwegian political-administrative culture is marked by cooperation and collaboration with civil service unions, by little tension between political and administrative executives and by a high level of mutual trust between public-sector organizations on different levels. The policy style is one of collaboration and 'sounding out' processes (Olsen, 1988). During the former center-right government (2001–05) this policy style was challenged, especially regarding the relationship with the civil service unions, which were seen by the political leadership as a problem for democracy, rather than an asset. Now the traditional culture has reasserted itself and the collaborative policy-making style has been re-installed. Therefore, the cultural tilting of administrative policy toward NPM, potentially undermining a traditional input-oriented culture, is now rebalanced.

Third, the external institutional environment also makes a difference. The reform program was developed in a period in which post-NPM reform features were becoming stronger in many countries. Efficiency was no longer the main goal, and was challenged by other public sector values and ethical questions. The focus was more on re-establishing the public sector ethos and rediscovering traditional bureaucratic values such as due process, impartiality, and predictability. Policy capacity and political accountability became main concerns, and the problem

of fragmentation and the need for integration and more horizontal coordination was underlined (Christensen and Læg Reid, 2007b). Instead of focusing on disaggregation and structural devolution there was a strong bid to reassert central control and bring the central state back in. Such international reform trends have obviously influenced the new Norwegian reform program. Both changing environmental reform ideas and myths, and instrumental challenges to NPM, participated in the White Paper's emphasis on norms of input democracy, control, and coordination.

Our argument is that administrative reforms are based on a combination of different driving forces or contexts, as underlined in the transformative approach. Public administration is faced with increasingly complex and multifunctional organizational forms, and administrative reforms can be understood as compound in the sense that they combine different organizational principles (Olsen, 2007b; Egeberg and Trondal, 2009). Compound administrative reforms are multi-dimensional and represent competing, inconsistent, and contradictory organizational principles and structures that co-exist and balance different considerations (Olsen, 2007b). Multidimensional orders are considered more robust against external shocks and therefore preferable to unidimensional orders (March and Olsen, 1989). In a pluralistic society, with many criteria for success and different causal understandings, we have to go beyond the idea of a single organizational principle to understand how public organizations are organized and reformed and to look at them as composite organizations (Olsen, 2005, 2007a).

Instead of assuming linear development toward more and more NPM reform and more output democracy, or a cyclical development where tradition strikes back and reinstalls the old public administration and input democracy, our argument is that we face a dialectical development in which the old public administration and input democracy mix with NPM and its leanings toward output democracy and post-NPM features to shape new hybrid organizational forms. Central components of the old Weberian bureaucratic model are sustainable and robust, but in the strong modern state they are supplemented with neo-Weberian features such as performance management and user participation and responsiveness (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004). This complex, dynamic, and layered development is illustrated in our analysis of the White Paper.

Conclusion

At the core of administrative policy is the question of *governance capacity* and efficiency, and to what degree developments in society are affected by government decisions and public policy programs. This involves steering capability and public-sector institutions' capacity to act. Another main question, which has been a focus in this paper, is the question of *governance representativity*, focusing on measures designed to strengthen representation of citizens' beliefs, attitudes, and opinions in the policy-making process. This question concerns citizens' effectiveness, user participation and influence. The argument is that the study of administrative

policy needs to return to an enlarged concept of political effects and move beyond the technical-functional flavor of administrative reforms with apolitical language. The main challenge is to find organizational forms that enhance both governance representativeness and governance capacity. Often there is a trade-off between the two (Dahl and Tufte, 1974). Following Scharpf (1999), our analysis shows that input-oriented representativeness and output-oriented effectiveness are both essential elements for democratic self-determination. Input legitimacy of electoral arrangements and output legitimacy of policy selection and service delivery are both important components of sustainable democratic arrangements, and successful administrative reforms in representative democracies have to take both features into account. The interesting question is how the trade-off between them changes over time.

We first discussed the implications of NPM and post-NPM for models of democracy. These models do not focus on democratic values and challenges. Second, it is evident that the balance and rebalance between different administrative models has changed the participation and influence of citizens, albeit in some countries more than others, reflecting variations in the implementation of reform ideas (Christensen and Lægreid, 2007a). The NPM model became influential in the 1990s and challenged the hierarchical model of governance, where the public interest was determined by a hierarchical and representative political process motivated by mass politics. This implied a redefinition of popular sovereignty, from a collective focus, where people's primary status is that of citizen, to an individual and customer-oriented focus (Hood, 1998). Third, there is a co-evolution of democracy and administrative reforms. As administrative policy has moved away from direct service delivery through public bureaucracies, democracy has also moved toward output democracy (Peters, 2008). However, eventually these trends can bounce back and revitalize input democracy and more traditional forms of public administration.

Over the past decade, this NPM model has been challenged by post-NPM reform measures, by an increased focus on integration, networks, and horizontal coordination, as well as by a rediscovery of bureaucracy and a renewed emphasis on the rule of law and legal principles. The result is increased complexity and the development of hybrid organizational forms. In a multifunctional public sector, goals often conflict and are imprecise. Accountability in such a system means being answerable to different stakeholders and achieving multiple and often ambiguous objectives.

NPM has helped broaden the options of those trying to influence the public authorities and participate in public decision-making processes through market mechanisms and customer orientation. Whether this is a good thing from a democratic point of view is, however, debatable. On one hand, one can argue along the old pluralist lines that the more active channels there are between the people and the public authorities, the better. Directly influencing public services is the 'real thing'. In a democracy, it is up to the citizens to choose which institutional

arrangements they prefer, and if they are dissatisfied with the existing system, it is their privilege to try other arrangements. However, we can also take a more skeptical view of the democratic value of people's status as customers. A managerial concept of democracy might weaken civic responsibility, engagement, and political equality, but enhance the roles of administrators and managers (Christensen and Lægheid, 2001). In administrative reform there is a need to strengthen the sense of trusteeship and the development of a polity with a common purpose based on trust, and to move away from the ideal of the politics of management with its terminology of efficiency, toward a politics of citizens with a language of power and legitimacy (see Wolin, 1960). It is a paradox that while one goal of NPM is to open public administration to the public, it may ultimately reduce the level of democratic accountability and lead to the erosion of the 'publicness' of public service (Peters, 1999; Haque, 2001). Post-NPM reform measures are supposed to handle some of these challenges by moving reforms away from output democracy and aggregative political processes in favor of a greater emphasis on input democracy and integrative political processes.

The White Paper analyzed shows this tension between NPM and post-NPM elements, that is, between output- and input-oriented democratic concerns. It shows a new administrative policy trying to move the administrative system and practice in a more input-oriented direction, through stressing traditional collective ideals and political control. The most interesting aspect of the paper is, however, how it handles the output-related elements. The NPM-related consumer orientation is supplemented and partly overshadowed by a general view of direct citizen participation in the civil service and its decisions and services. It is understandable that modern and well-educated citizens want more information about public activities, and eventually more influence, and that governments would like to give them more insights and information to strengthen support and legitimacy. The government seems to encourage consumer orientation and broad citizen participation as well as traditional corporative participation and input democracy. However, it is rather ambiguous what this amounts to, in terms of a democratic ideal, influence patterns and added value for democracy. One unresolved problem is the traditional but still a sensitive issue of unequal access to public institutions and services. Citizens with more resources might well be more able to use the new possibilities of greater involvement and direct participation than those with poor resources, which can easily produce greater inequality among the general public.

The new hybrid role of the citizen/user shown in the White Paper may have different implications in this respect. On the one hand, it may lead to the strengthening of direct democracy through an alternative channel to elections. On the other hand, the new role may lead to greater demands on people's resources for participation and therefore add to social inequality in influencing the political-administrative system. In this respect, actors with strong political and social resources may benefit from a combination of output-oriented features, whether

individual efforts or collective efforts through interest groups, and keeping their influence in the election channel.

In what way may the results of our analysis have wider implications for understanding administrative policy and civil service in different countries? First, Nordic countries were NPM laggards, so based on this the depth of NPM reform will be more shallow and the use of post-NPM reforms probably more extensive. In this respect, the Norwegian experience may have implications limited to a certain set of Scandinavian and Continental European countries (Hood, 1996). Second, the content analysis of the White paper, may show a more general balancing (also in democratic terms) typical for most countries, namely by combining elements from different reform waves and models of democracy, making the civil service more complex and hybrid, whether layered or not. The UK experience of Blair's joined-up governance may well be a similar act of balance and new participatory forms (Perri 6, 2005; Richards and Smith, 2006), as may the cultural leanings of modern reforms in Australia, the integrative features of the New Zealand experience (Gregory, 2006; Halligan, 2007), collaborative public management in the United States and the cross boundary horizontal governance initiatives in Canada (Christensen and Lægreid, 2007b).

Third, Norway, like other countries, faces ambiguous success-criteria and motivational complexity (Goodin, 1996) implying that economic standards have to be balanced with other normative standards such as different democratic values with shifting priorities (Olsen, 2007b). Democracies are founded on multiple coexisting principles with competing purposes, resources, and capabilities, and this is also reflected in administrative policy and reform initiatives related to the public administration as a core political institution.

Acknowledgements

We would thank the participants at the Study Group on "Governance of Public Sector Organizations" at the EGPA Conference in Malta, 2–5 September 2009 and two anonymous reviewers for helpful comments to an earlier version of this article.

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