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Democracy and administrative policy: Contrasting elements of NPM and post-NPM

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Preface

This paper was 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.–5.9.2009.

Summary

This paper put together an analytical platform for discussing and analyzing administrative reforms in terms of democracy. First, we present the fundamental positions of democratic theory represented by output-democracy and input-democracy. These two positions are used to classify different types of reform. A second more exploratory theoretical approach on democracy and reforms is a transformative one, which looks at 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 supplement each other in terms of layering or sedimentation processes. Third, we use these two theoretical approaches to describe and explain the democratic features of NPM and post-NPM-reforms. We take a broad overview of such reforms and make an in-depth analysis of a new administrative policy report – White Paper – from the Norwegian centre–left-government.

Sammendrag

I dette notatet presenters en analytisk plattform for å diskutere og analysere forvaltningsreformer i lys av demokrati. Først redegjøres det for ulike demokratisyn, representert ved «input-demokrati» og «output-demokrati». Disse to posisjonene brukes til å klassifisere ulike reformtyper. Deretter redegjøres det for en mer forklarende teoretisk tilnærming til reformer og demokrati ved hjelp av et transformativt perspektiv. Dette legger vekt på kombinasjonen av eksterne drivkrefter, intern administrativ kultur og strukturelle trekk ved det politisk-administrative systemet for å forstå variasjoner i demokratiske trekk ved forvaltningsreformer. Disse to teoretiske tilnærmingene blir brukt for å beskrive og forklare demokratiske trekk ved New Public Managment (NPM) og post-NPM reformer. En sentral problemstilling i notatet er i hvilken grad slike reformer kan oppfattes som alternative eller supplerende. Et hovedargument er at reformene best kan beskrives som en sedimenterings og lagdelingsprosess. Det gis en bred oversikt over slike reformer og en mer inngående analyse av regjeringens stortingsmelding «En forvaltning for demokrati og fellesskap» fra 2009.

Introduction

An important aspect of administrative reform is its implications for representative democracy (Lægreid and Roness 1999, Suleiman 2003). Here the conditions for governing by political leaders on behalf of the people and the effect of administrative reform on political governance are particularly relevant. Public reforms in recent decades – whether New Public Management reforms or post-NPM-reforms – reflects major changes in administrative policies in different countries (Pollitt and Boukcaert 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 paper.

The primary aim of the paper is to put together an analytical platform for discussing and analyzing reforms and new features of administrative policy in terms of democracy. This platform will consist 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 more traditional model of representative democracy, related to an input orientation, with individual-economic and pluralist models associated with an output perspective. Developments around the world seem to indicate a shift in emphasis from input to output democracy. These two positions in democratic theory will be used to classify or categorize different types of reform.

A second theoretical approach is a transformative one, which looks at a mixture of external features, domestic administrative culture and polity features to understand variations in the democratic aspects of public reforms (Christensen and Lægreid 2001a and 2007a). Central issues discussed are whether these reforms can be seen as alternatives or whether they supplement each other, how we can understand their complexity and whether we can talk about reforms and administrative policy in terms of layering or sedimentation processes. Thus, the transformative approach has a more explanatory purpose.

The second aim of the paper is to use these two theoretical approaches to describe and explain the democratic features of NPM and post-NPM-reforms. First, we take a broad overview of such reforms. New Public Management reforms are chiefly about structural devolution, horizontal specialization, market and management principles and efficiency, while post-NPM focuses more on central capacity and control, coordination within and between sectors, and value-based management (Christensen and Lægreid 2001a and 2007a, Christensen, Lie and Lægreid 2007, Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004). However, neither of these two reform waves explicitly address 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 towards input democracy again in post-NPM.

These issues are then addressed by a more in-depth analysis of a brand new administrative policy report - White Paper - from the Norwegian centre-left government entitled *An Administration for Democracy and Community*. The focus is on how this policy document handles the complex democratic value basis 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 by democracy, how it links democratic values to other public sector values, and whether this relationship is unambiguous or rather 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, based on the transformative approach, we will analyze 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 ideas, 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.

A Theoretical Platform

Descriptive theory: Classifying reforms in terms of basic democracy perspectives

In discussing the connection between democracy and bureaucracy Peters (2008) sees them 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 favour 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.

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 a lot of power (Hood 1998), and they consciously design the state apparatus to achieve collective goals. When conditions like the environmental context, interests and problems change, they reorganize the apparatus accordingly.

The collectivist model can be seen as reinforcing core structural and cultural elements, meaning that the structural order works in harmony with the integral features of the culture or the 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 the 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. To sum up the model (Aberbach and Christensen 2003): Political executives pursue the

collective purpose on behalf of the sovereign people, through a hierarchical command-like system. The public administration is neutral and implements collectively decided policies. It provides political executives with support and professional advice, but also has professional autonomy and discretion. Citizens are a collective part of the system, which they influence and support, but they also accept decisions made by the leaders.

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 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 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 traditional pluralist model and the newer individual–economic model. The pluralist model is based on the notion that the government apparatus is heterogeneous, consisting of different power centers, institutions and levels related to different interests (Allison 1971). The environment of the government is also heterogeneous, and the bureaucracy must therefore attend to and represent a complex 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 the content of 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 attentions 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.

To understand the working of the political–administrative system, the individual economic model uses the notion of individual actors pursuing their own interests and needing incentives to act in certain ways (Aberbach and Christensen 2003). Even though the model does include 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 that is said to have relevance in the public sector, despite differences in main purposes, structure, tasks and culture (Allison 1983). The model is heterogeneous concerning economic thinking and the structural solutions recommended, as shown by Boston et al. (1996) in their work on the 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 on 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 (Christensen and Lægreid 2001b, Self 2000). Executive politicians are believed to represent inefficiency, because they promise too much before elections and generally work in non-efficient ways; hence, the reasoning goes, they should decentralize authority and delegate tasks to a competent bureaucracy. At the same time, though, the

model takes a rather skeptical view of the bureaucracy, perceiving it as expansive, budget-maximizing and inefficient and therefore requiring the control of the political executive. All this creates a complex checks-and-balances system.

The individual-economic model challenges the traditional concept of citizenship espoused by the input model. It advocates moving away from an integrative position, where people belong to a path-dependent collectivity, and towards an aggregative position in which citizens are seen as atomized individuals with relatively weak ties (March and Olsen 1989). The model represents a narrower customer or consumer role, where 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. It may be seen as nonpolitical or even anti-political (Frederickson 1996), but also as representing an alternative and more direct form of democratic participation.

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 go on to see how they are reflected in the White Paper on administrative policy.

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 Lægreid 2001a and 2007a). First of all, the actions of the leadership can be constrained by environmental factors. The technical environment, for instance – whether in the form of external factors like globalization or the financial crisis or internal economic, social, political or technological pressures – may have an important influence on the direction taken by reforms and administrative policy. The other part of the environment, the institutional environment, may exert ideological pressures as international and national concept entrepreneurs try to further new ideologies, ideas, concepts and myths about how to organize the public sector. Certain ideas come to be «taken-for-granted» as they are taken on board and promoted by dominant professions, consulting firms or international and national commercial actors.

The second context is related to cultural processes. Public organizations evolve gradually by adapting to internal and external pressure. In a process of institutionalization they develop distinct cultural features represented by their informal norms and values (Selznick 1957). Institutionalization processes are related to path-dependency, i.e. 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 reforms that are incompatible will be bounced back or adopted only partially in a pragmatic way.

The third set of contextual factors relates to the formal structures in political–administrative systems, like constitutions, main type of election and representational system, whether the civil service is homogeneous or heterogeneous, etc. (Christensen and Lægreid 2001a). Certain combinations of structural factors offer better

preconditions 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 chooses to do so. In systems with multiple parties, where there are often minority coalition governments, or systems with a lot of checks and balances, like in the USA, the situation is very different.

Taken together, these three sets of constraining factors may at one extreme be rather favourable towards modern reforms, as studies of NPM have shown (Christensen and Lægreid 2001b, Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004). Countries facing economic crises, strong normative pressure from international organizations, and having an accommodating culture and «elective dictatorships» might adopt reforms of this kind most easily. Other countries might lag behind because of less external pressure, less accommodating cultures and more problematic structural preconditions. Between these extremes, there are many other variants conditioned by the complex way (outlined by the transformative approach) 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 towards some of the main norms and values of the old public administrations in the form of post-NPM-reforms in the late 1990s (Christensen, Lie and Lægreid 2007). Another is the preservation of some aspects of the old public administration and deinstitionalization of others. In other words only certain aspects of NPM are implemented while post-NPM becomes only partially institutionalized leading to a hybrid structure and culture that contains elements of the old public administration, NPM and post-NPM. One way to describe this is as a process of layering or sedimentation.

We will use the transformative approach to analyze the development from NPM towards post-NPM-reforms and also why the White Paper on administrative policy handles democracy questions in a certain way. We ask whether there is evidence of a layering process concerning democratic values when compared with earlier administrative policy papers and reports.

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

New Public Management – towards 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. The main feature of NPM is its one-dimensional emphasis on economic norms and values (Nagel 1997). This implies an ideological dominance of economic norms and a subordination to them of many other

traditionally legitimate norms and values like broader political concerns, sector policy goals, professional expertise, various rights and rules and the interests of societal groups (Boston et al. 1996, Egeberg 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, not differentiated according to type of structure or task (Peters and Pierre 1998). The new model of public governance challenges the traditional notions of both the welfare state and the citizen (Eriksen and Loftager 1996), perceiving the welfare state as a market-based delivery system, and the citizen as a customer (Olsen 1988). We will here primarily discuss how the new dominance of economic thinking about the public sector, represented by NPM, challenges democracy, popular sovereignty and the political-democratic control of systems and what implications it has 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 dialogue and debate about what should be done. Political accountability has the specific aim of making political leaders systematically responsive to popular wishes (Goodin 1999). Managerial accountability is a more neutral, technical exercise involving book-keeping 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. Our argument is that 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 (Romzek 2000, Behn 2001).

The NPM model is a customer-driven approach, where the public interest is defined by a series of bottom-up processes that permit each agency and its clients to determine the content of public 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 the NPM model 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 with regard to public services Christensen and Lægreid 2001b, Blomqvist and Rothstein 2000). 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 also ambiguous and debatable, and the issue of discriminating «creaming» and social segregation might be highly relevant (Blomqvist and Rothstein 2000).

This model is concerned with providing public services with the highest possible degree of productivity and flexibility (Olsen 1988). It could be argued that seen from the point of view 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 labelled 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).

Under NPM, accountability is based on output, competition, transparency, and contractual relations and thus represents a departure from public administration of the old school, where various forms of accountability were based on input processes and procedures, hierarchical control, legality, trust, and cultural traditions (Christensen and Lægreid 2002, Gregory 2001). There has been a development from simple to complex models of accountability (Day and Klein 1987).

In some ways the «bottom up» perspective implied by a customer-oriented system of public administration appears highly democratic and participatory. It permits customers and people directly affected by programs to have a potential impact on the amount, type and quality of service they are to receive. At the same, providing desired services to one set of clients may drain resources from other programs (Fountain 2001). And there is also the problem of democratic accountability. If the more customer-oriented vision of public service is adopted there are fewer common standards by which to judge the performance of organizations. 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 raises the question of whether NPM reforms based on the ideas of customer service, competition and contracting may not weaken civic responsibility, commitment and 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) and later known as «whole-of-government» – here labeled post-NPM-reforms – was launched in the late 1990s (Christensen and Lægreid 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 path-dependency and negative feedback in the most radical NPM countries such as the UK, New Zealand, and Australia (Perry 6 2005). As a response to the increased fragmentation caused by the NPM reform programs, 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 a main concern behind these reform initiatives (Mulgan 2005).

The concept of JUG was first introduced by the Blair government in 1997 and a 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». It denotes the aspiration to achieve horizontal and vertical coordination in order to eliminate situations in which different policies undermine each other, to make better use of scarce resources, to create synergies by bringing together different stakeholders in a particular policy area, and to offer citizens seamless rather than fragmented access to services (Pollitt 2003).

The overlap with the «whole-of-government» (WG) concept is obvious. The *Connecting Government Report* defines WG in the Australian Public Service thus: «Whole-of-government 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. It is about joining up at the top, but also about joining up at the base, enhancing local integration, and it involves public-private partnerships. 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 of 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 election 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 have a feeling that they have lost the capacity to handle wicked societal problems that straddled several sectors, whether caused by globalization or not. Another reason for recentralization and reintegration is that NPM seems to have problems delivering on efficiency, whether on a macro or micro level. Added to this, an increasingly insecure world with terrorism, pandemics and tsunamis (Christensen and Lægreid 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-balance the specialization and fragmentation of NPM, which is also related to sub-cultures and more narrow cultural foci.

Yet 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 to participate in making that policy more representative and in implementing it – all elements taken from output models. Joined-up government, as exemplified in the UK, 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.

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 in the paper related to the two reform waves?

The Norwegian White Paper – a return to or a rebalancing of democratic values?

The White Paper from the current Red–Green-government on administrative policy from 2009 (St.meld.nr.19 (2008–2009)) is entitled *An Administration for Democracy and Community*. The main aim of the administrative 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. This includes building on democratic values and having the civil service help the government achieve political goals by preparing and implementing decisions on a professional basis. It also involves the civil service improving and renewing itself. 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 superior priorities makes demands on political control larger. A coordinated use of means is also mentioned, including the use of management by objectives, cross-sectoral coordination and ICT coordination.
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 fulfil 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 keeping 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 two-fold, namely that the civil service should attend to political signals and be loyal towards 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 say the civil service in Norway has changed to become less focused than before 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 – for example by «role purification» in the regulatory agencies – and less specialized through mergers. Rule-simplification and increased user rights are more evident, there has been more digitalization and new working methods have developed. The demography of the civil service has also changed, with more female staff at all levels.

Related to this, the paper says that administrative policy is about balancing different considerations (see Egeberg 1997). One is about 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. A 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. A fourth addresses the balance between professional competence and efficiency. Here the main concern is to reconcile the need for very specialized knowledge and organizational specialization with ensuring that policies are holistic and coordinated.

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, for example through specially adapted solutions, and a broad 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. A third challenge is related to an open economy, internationalization and an increasing pressure on the public purse. Adding to this the connection between public use of resources and results is often complex and ambiguous, while conflicting public goals necessitate more knowledge about goals, means and effects.

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

But there is also another major aspect of the way democracy is defined in the paper, that potentially makes it 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 influencing 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 a greater influence over how society works, helped by an open civil service that provides them with 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.

So 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 the balance between 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. It stresses that this principle should be strengthened to respond to the challenges in society and inside the political-administrative apparatus. Without actually saying directly that the shift towards more devolution, more specialization and more market orientation has been a failure, it emphasizes that what is needed is more central control and coordination. This is bringing the input-orientated democratic elements back in and deemphasizing the output elements, particularly the individual-economic ones.

On the other hand, this perspective is challenged by its assertion of people's need to participate in government through direct contact with the civil service and not just through the electoral channel, and related to that, the need for openness, information, and representativeness in the civil service. This is a general perspective that emphasises individual over collective elements and the role of citizens over that of users. The effect may be a rather mixed while its emphasis on citizens signals a more collective view, its orientation towards the individual may be a response to criticism from non-socialist parties that stress individual choice. The more crucial question with this additional democratic element is how it should be organized, but the White Paper provides little indication of how this should be done, 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 bee more a source of transparency and information designed to secure support and legitimacy of the indirect democracy? Or should the balance between the two changes to the detriment of the election channel? It is more of the former than the latter.

How about elements from NPM and post-NPM in the White Paper? To start with, the paper 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 in the paper 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 it is modified and weaker, is also typical of NPM, as is the emphasis on ICT and increased 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 new competence, without being very specific on this point. A post-NPM perspective is also evident in the statement that decisions further down in the hierarchy must have a clear anchoring on the central level, sending a message of more central control to balance autonomy. Post-NPM concerns are also obvious in the requirement that increased variety must be met by standardization, more holistic competence developed, and that service should be more seamless across sectors and have clearer overriding priorities. Also the emphasis on ethical guidelines, platform for leadership and strengthening the public ethos are clear post-NPM elements. The previous strong market orientation and focus on competition is criticized for producing fragmentation and disintegration of the civil service. The paper also calls for an administrative policy that will strengthen democratic values and stresses the need for more political control of resources and institutions on behalf of the community. As indicated, this emphasis is weakened by the paper's rather broad notion of democracy, combining elements from the pluralist and individual-economic models, but also moving beyond those.

The White Paper is very vague concerning specific changes, even if the basic rhetoric has changed. The basic values are said to be stable and the preferred major organizational forms seem to be the same. Overall, the paper seems to add complexity and ambiguity to administrative policy, by combining different notions of democracy in an unclear way. Elements from the old public administration, NPM and post-NPM seem to be combined and overlaid, but with a relative strengthening of the post-NPM elements.

Summing up, the White Paper signals a reform break more than a new reform wave. It presents a hybrid and multi-dimensional model. The policy document may be seen as inspired by the British «third way» ideas which combine core NPM elements with discourses of partnership, community, participation and collaboration (Ashworth,

Boyne and Delbridge 2009). What we see is a coexistence of different institutional logics, such as customer orientation, professionalism, markets and corporations. The multifunctional character of public administration is underlined. There is a stronger focus on citizen participation, community and democratic values. The paper represents a combination of input and output democracy features. Even if the minister in charge has declared that she wants to throw NPM into the garbage can, NPM is not rejected, but somewhat down-played. The document represents an adjustment of the course from market solutions and an efficiency focus towards more emphasis on political steering, democracy and community. But no big new ideas are introduced.

The main message is that the public administration is working well. No radical change is needed but incremental modernization is encouraged. Some reform ideas are introduced or upgraded and are presented as supplementing previous reform programs rather than replacing them. 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. There is also an increased focus on participation from civil service unions and affected parties. The Nordic model of a cooperative policy style between the government and interest organizations is underlined. ICT is seen as an important whole-of government tool that can enhance integration and coordination. 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

NPM as a reform wave was rather compatible with the traditional culture in Anglo-American countries, which was why reforms fell on more fertile ground there than in, say, Continental-European and Scandinavian countries which were more reluctant reformers because of less cultural compatibility (Hood 1996). As post-NPM-reforms emerge, the interesting question arises of whether the new reforms have a path-dependency related to the old administrative system or to NPM. 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» – i.e. NPM has a constraining effect on post-NPM-reforms (Christensen and Lægreid 2006).

Myths and diffusion are not only associated with NPM reforms, but also with post-NPM-reforms. The counter-myths that have drummed up support for a new generation of reforms have attended to the negative aspects of NPM, claiming that NPM is destroying the welfare state and benefiting the few, undermining political control, creating mistrust, reducing legitimacy and producing ambiguity and less transparency, not to mention symbols connected with external threats like terrorism, pandemics and tsunamis (Christensen, Lie and Lægreid 2007, Christensen and Lægreid 2007b). The images associated with the «whole-of-government» (WG) or «joined-up government» (JUG) initiatives that have characterized post-NPM-reforms readily bring to mind the

idea of repairing and putting back together something that is broken, has fallen apart or become fragmented (Gregory 2006). In this sense their benefits are taken for granted, and very few actors would dispute the advantages of an integrated governmental apparatus or of taking anything other than a wide and collaborative view.

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 without behavioural consequences (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Røvik 1998). While nationally based reforms have unique features, they are also influenced by international trends. The main reform ideas, solutions, methods of implementation and practice, as well as effects coming from outside, change when they encounter different political-administrative and historical-cultural contexts. Such transformation 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 takes place as they are put into operation 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 1998).

Thus, the transformative perspective is not only about combining and blending different perspectives but also about *translation*: Co-evolution, dynamic interplay and processes of mutual dependency between reforms, structural features, culture and environmental pressure (Christensen and Lægreid 2007a). If we regard administrative reform purely as a meeting between external pressure and national constraints and strategies, we lose sight of important aspects of the process. The reforms are constrained by structural, cultural and environmental features but the reforms 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, Lægreid and Pedersen 2004). The reforms are at one and the same time both a product of cultural, structural and environmental features and a cause of change in those features. Translation transforms both the substance in what is translated and those who translate. 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, as was experiences by NPM reforms, is subjected to different approaches in different countries and policy areas.

Taking the latest administrative policy program from the Norwegian government as an illustration this can be seen as a product of different driving forces described by the transformative approach (Christensen and Lægreid 2001a and 2007a). First, the political administrative context is crucial. The electoral campaign of the incumbent centre-left government was based largely on an anti-NPM ticket. The civil service unions were a strong supporting partner in the campaign and they represented a clear anti-NPM position. The electoral campaign was successful and for the first time in 20 years Norway got a majority government in 2005. This was the first time the Labour party joined with other parties to form a winning coalition, and also the first time the

Socialist-Left Party came to power. This party was given the Ministry for Government Administration and Reform, which was responsible for the White Paper. Given this background, the government might have been expected to quickly come up with a clear anti-NPM administrative program. But this did not happen. Only towards the end of its four year term did the government present its program, but its profile did not live up to the expectations and promises of the electoral campaign.

To understand this outcome we must supplement the structural-instrumental features with negotiation and administrative cultural aspects as well as taking into account pressure from the international environment. In Norway there are strong sector ministries and weak overarching ministries. Thus most reforms are conducted by 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. When the ministry tries to launch its own administrative policy it is met with skepticism by the sectoral ministries, which would like to control reform processes in their own policy area. Thus reform programs, like the White Paper represents, tend to become a vague compromise focusing on some non-binding general values and principles rather than being a specific, concrete and operationalized program. In addition there is also tension within the cabinet between the small and more NPM-skeptical Socialist Left Party and the dominant and more NPM-friendly Labour Party.

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 consists of collaboration and «sounding out» processes (Olsen 1988). During the former centre-right government 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 made a comeback and the collaborative policy-making style has been re-installed. Also there is a translation and editing process going on when the inexperienced and rather ideological Socialist Left MPs encounter the day-to-day administrative work and practices within the central government administration. Via processes of mutual learning and co-evolution within a common political-administrative culture the policy program has tended to change to pass the «compatibility test», implying that it must not represent too radical a departure from the established administrative culture and tradition.

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 but was being 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. Instead of focusing on disaggregation and structural devolution there was a stronger bid to reassert stronger central control and bring the central state back in. Such international reform trends have

obviously influenced the new Norwegian reform program. But it is also clear that these new trends have not replaced the NPM features but rather supplemented them. NPM is by no means over, but it has lost its dynamic and is being supplemented by post-NPM ideas.

Our argument is that administrational reforms are based on a combination of different driving forces, as underlined in the transformative approach. Public administration is faced with increasingly complex and multifunctional organizational forms and the administrative reforms in public sector can be understood as compound in the sense that they combine different organizational principles (Olsen 2007b, Egeberg and Trondal 2007). 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). Multi-dimensional orders are considered more robust against external shocks and therefore preferable to uni-dimensional orders (March and Olsen 1989). Compound reforms thus dispense with «either/or» theorizing by assuming that executive governance rests on the mobilization of multiple and complementary sets of institutions, actors, interests, decision-making arenas and values. This we have labelled a transformative approach. 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 a linear development towards more and more NPM reform, or a cyclical development where tradition strikes back and reinstalls the old public administration, our argument is that we face a dialectical development in which the old public administration mixes with New Public Management 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).

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 the question of 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. A main challenge is to find organizational forms that enhance both governance representativity and governance capacity. Often there is a trade-off between the two (Dahl and Tufte 1974).

In this paper we first of all discussed the implications of NPM and post-NPM for models of democracy. First, these models are overall not much explicitly focused on

democratic values and challenges. Secondly, it is evident that the balance between different administrative models has changed the participation and influence of people in public affairs, albeit in some countries more than others, reflecting variations in the implementation of reform ideas in practice (Christensen and Lægreid 2001a). 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).

Over the past decade this NPM model has been challenged by post-NPM reform measures, by a reassertion of the centre, 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 multi-functional public sector goals are often conflicting and imprecise. Accountability in such a system means beeing answerable for the achievement of multiple and often ambiguous objectives.

NPM has helped to broaden the options of people 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 the 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. A supporting argument for the increased emphasis on the consumer would be that this brings people into closer contact with the operative parts of the political-administrative system and the services provided to them. The election of representatives to political bodies is a rather indirect and distant form of democracy, while 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.

But 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 and enhance the role of administrators and managers (Christensen and Lægreid 2001b). There is a need to strengthen the sense of trusteeship and the development of a polity with a common purpose based on trust. 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 erosion of the «publicness» of public service (Haque 2001, Peters 1999). Post-NPM reform measures are supposed to handle some of these challenges by moving the reforms away from output democracy and aggregative political processes in favour of a greater emphasis on input-democracy and integrative political processes.

The White Paper analyzed shows this tension between the NPM and post-NPM elements, i.e. between output and input oriented democratic concerns. It shows a new administrative policy trying to move the administrative system and practice more in an input-oriented direction, through stressing traditional collective ideals and political control. The most interesting aspect of the paper is, however, how the paper handles the output-related elements. The NPM-related consumer orientation is supplemented

and partly overshadowed by a general view of broad citizen participation directly towards 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 through direct participation, and that government 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. But it is rather ambiguous what this adds up to both concerning a democratic ideal, influence patterns and added value for democracy.

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