Perspectives on International Public Administration Research
A Rejoinder to Johan Christensen and Kutsal Yesilkagit

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Abstract

In a recent essay, Johan Christensen and Kutsal Yesilkagit take issue with the ongoing debate about International Public Administrations (IPAs). In their text, they engage in particular with the works of the authors of this paper. In our rejoinder, we reply to Christensen and Yesilkagit's arguments regarding the shortcomings of our research and discuss the concepts of autonomy and style of international administrations as well as the behaviour of international bureaucrats and bureaucracies. Furthermore, we discuss Christensen and Yesilkagit's recommendation of using the Public Service Bargains concept as a superior approach for analysing IPA. Our rejoinder aims at a respectful dialogue that highlights different epistemic positions and improves our joint understanding of the challenges and potentials of emerging research on IPAs.

Keywords

Introduction[1]

The Westphalian state experiences a transformation that is both internal and external in relation to its international environment. We need to come to grips with it. In particular, the rising incongruence between collective action capacities, territorial boundaries, and the domains in which effective policy solutions are required poses immense challenges. With view to policy areas like migration, the climate, cyber security, combatting infectious diseases, keeping finance and banking systems stable, and regulating international trade, scholars have focused on the delegation of authority from national governments to upper- and lower-level public and private actors (Hooghe and Marks 2003). Moreover, the organisational infrastructures on which intergovernmental and transnational interaction run have also received more attention (Barnett and Finnemore 2004). As bureaucracy at the international level and in its internationalised forms constitutes an indispensable part of the emerging order beyond the nation state (Knill and Bauer 2016; Trondal 2017a), scholars from numerous disciplinary backgrounds have engaged in studying what we conceive as International Public Administrations (Bauer et al. 2017; for a recent overview of the broader debate, see Stone and Moloney 2019). There is an impressive research output, which builds on previous debates (Haas 1964; Cox and Jacobson 1973; Ness and Brechin 1988; Mouritzen 1990) as much as it establishes new perspectives (see the reference list below). No matter how one assesses the novelty and innovativeness of recent scholarly output in this area, there is no doubt that efforts to empirically study and systematically theorise international bureaucracies are on the rise. In that sense, the topic of International Public Administration (IPA) has conquered the agenda.

In a recent essay, Johan Christensen and Kutsal Yesilkagit (2018) take issue with the ongoing debate on IPA research, engaging in particular with a subset of the current research efforts that includes our own. We welcome Christensen and Yesilkagit's (C&Y's) critique as such but find many claims about our studies unfounded. We are also not convinced that their suggested strategy to overcome the alleged research deficits would actually solve the problems they raise. Therefore, we take this opportunity to engage in a respectful dialogue with the authors. After a brief appreciation of C&Y's general claims, we respond in more detail to their arguments, specifically pertaining to the autonomy, styles and behaviour of international bureaucracies. We then briefly revisit the concept of Public Service Bargains, which C&Y advocate as the way to disentangle the puzzles surrounding IPAs. We conclude by emphasising the importance of IPA as a research area and the virtues of an open dialogue that seeks to refine our analytical concepts.

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[1] This paper is a response to an article which was published as Christensen, J. and Yesilkagit, K. (2018) 'International public administrations: a critique', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26, 6, 1–16. doi:10.1080/13501763.2018.1508245. We will refer to the article as C&Y throughout the text.

IPA's Autonomy, Style, and Behaviour

C&Y state at the beginning of their text that 'existing theorising suffers from two important weaknesses: concepts are poorly developed and not firmly rooted in public administration scholarship, and the literature pays insufficient attention to international administrations' relationship with politics' (Christensen and Yesilkagit 2018, p. 1). They focus their criticism on the collection of articles published in a JEPP special issue (2016, volume 23, issue 7) edited by two authors of this paper. C&Y particularly address works on bureaucratic autonomy (Bauer and Ege 2016a; 2017; Ege 2017), administrative styles and organisational behaviour (Trondal 2010; Knill et al. 2016; Knill et al. 2018), and bureaucratic influence (Eckhard and Ege 2016; Knill and Bauer 2016).

We fully support C&Y's call to further develop theoretical concepts; indeed, our own analytical suggestions are meant to serve as stepping stones for further debate, not as irrefutable axioms. The question of how easily concepts of bureaucratic autonomy, administrative style, and organisational behaviour can 'travel' from purely national to international and transnational contexts is a valuable one. We, too, understand the importance of identifying the context factors and scope conditions under which a certain analytical concept can be transferred from national environments into the international sphere. And, as we shall describe below, we have devoted considerable thinking to this question with regard to autonomy, style, and bureaucratic behaviour. The point, however, is that this reflection cannot and should not be informed by Public Administration (PA) scholarship alone; rather, conceptual reflections on IPA need to stretch beyond the narrow PA horizon. It is in our view not sufficient to simply extend PA studies to the international level. We should bring together insights and conceptual considerations across sub-disciplines, such as PA, International Relations (IR), European Studies, Organisational Sociology, and Public Management in order to enrich our understanding of the new realities in international and transnational policy-making. As argued elsewhere (Bayerlein et al. 2019), ignoring other (sub-)disciplinary perspectives provides an inaccurate picture of existing research on international bureaucracies and hinders academic problem-solving and knowledge accumulation. Let us be clear: PA-based perspectives naturally play a central role in the study of international bureaucracies. But they should not be privileged to the exclusion of other insights that cross artificial academic borders (Bauer and Ege 2014, p. 79). From a purely disciplinary perspective, this may look like eclecticism. For us, it is the appropriate way forward in unchartered waters.

Against this background, we restrict ourselves in the following sections to C&Y's narrower critiques of the concepts of international bureaucratic autonomy, international administrative style, and international bureaucratic behaviour.

Autonomy

C&Y agree with us that studying bureaucratic autonomy is of great importance to understand IPAs. Autonomy is always relative; absolute autonomy among political or bureaucratic actors does not exist in our political order. While we do indeed focus on the 'bureaucratic side of the story,' we contest C&Y's general claim that we

underestimate or downplay the importance of politics. Investigating the bureaucratic autonomy of IPAs—particularly as we have defined and conceptualised it—is an important step in understanding the politics-administration relationship within international organisations. It is true that we approach the question of bureaucratic autonomy from a more pragmatic perspective, as opposed to a philosophical or a broadly sociological one. Our goal is an empirically applicable yardstick that can be used to identify patterns and intensities of IPA autonomy, and enable systematic cross-sectional comparisons. As such, we think C&Y misjudge central conceptual and measurement-related choices. To put it bluntly, most of their criticism focuses on what our concept fails to deliver and neglects what it was actually designed to do.

Bureaucratic autonomy is a latent concept that cannot be observed directly. It is popular in Public Administration and Public Management research alike, where scholars have suggested different ways of conceptualising autonomy and approaching it empirically (for summaries of these efforts, see Verhoest et al. 2004; Yesilkagit 2011; Maggetti and Verhoest 2014). C&Y offer the following three main critiques of our way of studying IPA autonomy: 1) some of the indicators we use to measure autonomy relate to more than one sub-concept; 2) our conceptualisation is not firmly rooted in relevant public administration debates; and 3) our conceptuali-sation is not able to capture changes over time. We discuss each of these claims in turn.

The first critique concerns our basic conceptualisation of autonomy, in which we dis-tinguish between 'autonomy of will' (the ability to develop autonomous preferences) and 'autonomy of action' (the capacity for autonomous action). C&Y argue that the two sub-concepts are not determined by distinct factors. More specifically, they claim that two of our indicators (personnel resources and leadership) may influence both sub-concepts at the same time. We agree that measurement choices are generally deba-table and need to be defended based on empirical as well as theoretical grounds. We think, however, that C&Y base their criticism on a flawed understanding of our mea-surement approach. While C&Y briefly describe the multidimensional concept struc-ture, their critique goes on to assume that our indicators directly relate to the two sub--concepts of autonomy of will and action. Yet, this is not the case. We do not aim to operationalise *autonomy of will* and *autonomy of action* directly. Instead, we use *admini-strative differentiation* and *administrative homogeneity* to further specify *autonomy of will* and *(statutory) powers* and *administrative resources* to conceptualise *autonomy of action*. It is only in a second step that we develop empirical indicators, at which point we make it clear that the indicators are supposed to measure the respective dimensions in order to 'offer empirical insights into components of autonomy at different conceptual levels' (Bauer and Ege 2016a, p. 1034). Consequently, the individual indicators should only be interpreted with respect to their overarching dimension and not related directly to either of the sub-concepts (autonomy of will and action) or to bureaucratic autonomy as a whole. Otherwise, the whole idea of further specifying the autonomy concept into two sub-concepts and five dimensions would be undermined.

Of course, this does not mean that our conceptualisation is immune to critique of its measurement. We take a lot of care to reflect on and justify the choices made.[2] Following the example given by C&Y, one may argue, for instance, that the indicator measuring the size of personnel resources (per policy field) may also affect *administrative homogeneity* (as larger bureaucracies tend to become less homogenous). This argument can even be substantiated by showing empirically—e.g., by means of a principal component analysis or factor analysis—that one indicator 'loads' higher on another dimension than on its own and should thus be skipped or replaced. In the article, we made a first step towards such an empirical assessment of our measurement by reporting pairwise correlations both between indicators and between the different dimensions. We also used Cronbach's alpha to obtain (positive) evidence for the internal consistency of *administrative cohesion*, which is operationalised by four indicators.[3] Thus, while we acknowledge that some indicators work better than others, we still stand by our general concept structure. Giving up the basic concept structure because some indicators seem to load on other dimensions or because one dimension may suffer from internal inconsistency would throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater. Instead, we opt for an incremental approach that leaves open the ability to replace weak individual indicators as better ones are developed (see, e.g., Hanretty and Koop 2012).

C&Y's second critique holds that our conceptualisation of autonomy is not firmly rooted in public administration debates. More specifically, they argue that we do not pay sufficient attention to the 'key distinction' (p. 3) between *de jure* and *de facto* autonomy (Yesilkagit and van Thiel 2008). It is true that we do not discuss the distinction between de jure and de facto autonomy in our work. The reason for this, however, is noted by C&Y themselves as they point to the weak empirical relationship between the two types of autonomy (p. 3-4). Thus, it is unclear how a discussion of an organisation's formal status would add to our goal of capturing the capacity of IPAs to influence public policy. if it has already been established empirically that the formal-legal prescription of an administrative body (i.e., its de jure autonomy) is only loosely related to its actual autonomy (see also Maggetti 2007; Yesilkagit and van Thiel 2008; Gilardi and Maggetti 2011, p. 205; Hanretty and Koop 2013).[4] Our point is not that the formal structure of IPAs is irrelevant. We simply think that in order to do justice to the complex nature of the phenomenon with regard to International Organisation (IO) policy-making, these factors are best accounted for at the measurement level instead

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2 What is true is that the defence of our choices takes a lot of space, so especially in journal articles, we were not able to go into all the details. However, we always provided further references to publications where the details of our measurement and coding where explained in more detail (Bauer and Ege 2016b; Ege 2016; Bauer and Ege 2017).

3 Such a statistical approach to measurement validity is based on the idea that indicators associated with the same concept or dimension should be highly correlated with one another (and only weakly with other indicators). This is, however, not the only understanding of what measurement validity actually means. An alternative perspective is rooted in qualitative research on social science concept-building (Goertz 2006). This approach is not based on the assumption that dimensions should ideally to be independent of each other but allows us to look into the anatomy of autonomy empirically (Ege 2017).

4 In the article, we explicitly admit that our discussion needs to remain selective because the literature on bureaucratic autonomy is very extensive (Bauer and Ege 2016a, p. 1034–35).

of directly equating autonomy with its observable implications (as the prominent differentiation between legal, personnel, or financial autonomy suggests).

It bears repeating that our goal is to assess empirically whether there is indeed a relationship between the structural factors we use to measure autonomy and an IPA's eventual policy influence. We also consider this a feasible strategy for cross-case comparison and a good alternative to using formal-legal status (de jure autonomy) or self-perception from survey data to infer the 'real' or 'actual' autonomy of an organisation. One may argue that we should have been more explicit on this point in the article that C&Y focus on (but see Bauer and Ege 2016b; 2017), but this does not support a conclusion that our conceptualisation is poorly developed or ungrounded in public administration debates.

C&Y's third critique of our conceptual framework is that it would not capture how bureaucratic autonomy evolves over time. To be sure, we acknowledge that some of the most powerful means by which bureaucracies can become more autonomous are process-related and time-dependent. That autonomy is 'forged' over time (Carpenter 2001) is supported in the literatures on both public administrations and international bureaucracies. IPAs are found to be particularly autonomous if they are recognised as an authority by decision-makers (Barnett and Finnemore 2004, p. 20). Based on this finding, our colleagues in the larger context of our research group argue, for instance, that expert authority is not a characteristic of the IPA itself but based on unquestioned recognition and voluntary compliance from their stakeholders—in this case, national ministries (Busch and Liese 2017).[5] This implies that IPAs must first build a reputation for expertise before this expertise can be used to influence states via mechanisms of policy transfer (Busch 2015).[6]

We agree that our conceptualisation does not capture such reputation-based sources of autonomy and—at the indicator level at least—is thus ill-equipped to empirically capture changes in autonomy over time. One of the indicators offers a partial historical perspective (*independent leadership* considers the employment history of the last five executive heads), but the others capture cross-case variation only. As such, the selected indicators may generally be capable of accommodating a longitudinal perspective, but in their current form, they are indeed not well equipped to capture changes in autonomy over time - let alone to detect more fine-grained differences. Nonetheless, we argue our conceptualisation still provides a useful reference point for scholars trying to identify where within an IO's structure such changes manifest themselves. For instance, if an IPA's research capacities increase over time because more financial and personnel resources are dedicated to research (or policy evaluations for

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5 This aspect is studied in detail by the project 'International public administrations as policy experts (Expertise)' headed by Andrea Liese and Per-Olof Busch (http://ipa-research.com/). Thus, the fact that we do not focus on the expertise-based reputation of IPAs can also be seen as a consequence of the division of labour within the IPA research group.

6 With regard to bureaucratic autonomy, an important question is whether reputation should be conceptualised as a cause (in the sense of an explanatory factor) or an implication (in the sense that it can e.g. be used for developing an indicator) of autonomy. This has substantial consequences for whether to include reputation in the autonomy concept or conceptualise it as a separate factor.

that matter), or if the organisation is restructured in a way that transfers the research function to a more central level, this constitutes in our scheme an increase in administrative differentiation that may in turn strengthen the ability of international secretariats to develop autonomous bureaucratic preferences. Likewise, changes in financial and personnel resources can be seen as useful indicators that help IPAs to transform their preferences into action (autonomy of action). We have applied exactly such a time-sensitive perspective elsewhere (see, e.g., Ege and Bauer 2017; Ege 2018). That our structure-based perspective is not able to draw the entire picture of how autonomy changes should be evident and is a problem shared by all empirical-comparative analytical approaches. Only a process-based analysis would provide a suitable alternative here—but this could not cover the range of IPAs which our scheme does and can.

To counter C&Y, then, we maintain that our conceptualisation of bureaucratic autonomy is a useful tool to investigate an IPA's relationship with (IO) politics. The conceptualisation has elicited controversy, but this is precisely what we hoped for. It ensures that our understanding of autonomy will continue to be developed and refined—preferably in empirical applications and triangulations that could feedback in improving our indicator setup and thus the precision of our measurements.

Style

The second concept that C&Y question is that of administrative styles and how we have applied it to IPAs. Again, C&Y allege our failure to adequately consider the political nature of public administrations and a lack of conceptual and theoretical grounding in PA research. We believe that C&Y are mistaken in these claims and discuss these broad points in the order they have been raised.

First, C&Y state that our conceptualisation of administrative styles is 'both unclear and unsatisfactory,' in that 'equating administrative styles with standard operating procedures is a conflation of two distinct notions and sits awkwardly with the behaviours described as styles' (C&Y, p. 5). If we understand this fairly vague claim correctly, their argument is that our take on administrative styles is conceptually at odds with standard operating procedures. We do not believe this to be the case. Administrative styles have long been understood as the standard operating procedures of administrative behaviour and decision-making, i.e., as organisational culture on the meso-level (Jann 2002). Indeed, administrative styles as defined by Knill (2001) are informal routines that characterise the behaviour and activities of public administrations in the policy-making process, i.e., in shaping, drafting, and implementing public policies (Howlett 2003). We thus see no reason why administrative styles and standard operating procedures should be considered 'distinct notions,' as the latter are in fact part of the former's very definition.

Still on the topic of standard operating procedures, C&Y ask, '[i]s acting as an entrepreneur really a standard operating procedure' (p. 5)? We argue that the devil lies in the details. Entrepreneurial routine administrative behaviour is not to be confused with what has been described as 'policy entrepreneurship' or 'institutional entrepreneurship' in singular instances of policy change (Kingdon 1984; DiMaggio

1988; Mintrom and Norman 2009). These labels are usually used to describe (groups of) actors who have, in a specific case, worked (successfully) to bring about policy change in a given area. By contrast, IPAs with an entrepreneurial administrative style exhibit overall routine patterns of behaviour that can be described as comparatively entrepreneurial, i.e., generally oriented towards policy advocacy as well as institutional consolidation (Knill et al. 2018, p. 8). This *orientation* towards making a difference in substantial and institutional terms does not necessarily manifest itself in actual changes (Knill et al. 2018, p. 5). Rather, the label captures a generally 'high degree of entrepreneurial flare' (Mintrom and Norman 2009, p. 649), not only among certain individuals in certain situations, but as a stable default across the organisation. We acknowledge the terminologies may seem to overlap — singularly acting as an entrepreneur does not constitute an entrepreneurial administrative style on its own. However, acting entrepreneurially can—as a stable, routinized, and consistent administrative style—equally be a standard operating procedure.

Second, C&Y claim that 'the authors do not provide a clear theoretical foundation for the notion of administrative styles' (p. 5) without providing any more detail. It is true that the article format of our written works on styles has not allowed for much theoretical argumentation thus far. Especially when the article has an empirical focus at the same time. Therefore, there is no explicit section on the theoretical or ideational derivation of the concept in many instances (Knill et al. 2016; Knill et al. 2017; Knill et al. 2018; but see Knill and Bayerlein 2019). This superficial observation, however, should not be taken for a lack of theoretical grounding per se. As a subset of policy styles, the concept of administrative styles is firmly rooted in PA scholarship and the political science literature more broadly (Davies 1967; Richardson et al. 1982; Vogel 1986; van Waarden 1995; Knill 2001; Adam et al. 2017). Our core argument that formal rules are not expected to automatically generate the desired organisational behaviour is similarly in line with classical findings of organisational studies and the public administration literature. A number of canonical studies emphasise the limits of programming administrative behaviour through formal rules as well as potentially dysfunctional consequences of exclusively rule-oriented behaviour (Selznick 1949; Blau 1955; Merton 1968; March and Simon 1993). We therefore disagree with C&Y and contend that there are several PA theoretical 'staples' supporting our reasoning.

More importantly we are convinced—as pointed out above—that our research on IPAs should not be confined by the narrow boundaries of PA scholarship when a more interdisciplinary perspective would be more appropriate (Bayerlein et al. 2019). It might be PA theoretical blinkers that lead to C&Y's quite incomplete view on the field of IPA research in general, and what they consider theoretical foundations in particular. Our theoretical considerations and influences are decisively not restricted to PA scholarship. This is especially true for our latest conceptual paper on IPA styles (Knill et al. 2018), which is a substantial theoretical and conceptual evolution of our argument, and not the only 'slightly different' version that C&Y describe it as (p.5).

Our argument that the configuration of external and internal challenges to the IPA gives rise to administrative styles draws heavily and explicitly on new institutionalist reasoning (Knill et al. 2018). (New) institutional theorists have moved towards

bringing 'agency back into the institutional framework without denying the crucial importance of institutional embeddedness and thus move[d] beyond the vague notion of institutional pressures to investigate the dialectical interplay between actors' actions and institutional embeddedness' (Leca and Naccache 2006, p. 643; see also Oliver 1991). Actions and behaviour are a product of the interplay of organisational agency (internal) and the demands of the surrounding institution, that is, the organisational environment (external) (Pache and Santos 2010). An IPA's experience with institutional demands thus varies depending on how external and internal pressures interact (Greenwood and Hinings 1996). Far from lacking a theoretical foundation, our argument is thus well-grounded in new institutionalist scholarship.

A similar thing can be said about management and organisational theory and the field of IR. On the one hand, administrative routine behaviour has been extensively studied by scholars with a background in management and organisational studies (for overviews see: Becker 2004; Parmigiani and Howard-Grenville 2017). Organisational routines such as administrative styles form as a 'natural product of action' (Feldman and Pentland 2003, p. 98), when multiple actors face the challenge of solving similar and recurring tasks using coordinated interaction. Once formed, these routines are assumed to be relatively stable, although not entirely static (Pentland and Feldman 2005). Our assumption that administrative styles are rather stable routines that emerge in response to sustained challenges and necessities captures precisely this thinking. Finally, IR scholarship has informed our discussions of domain challenges to the IPA (Abbott et al. 2015; Abbott et al. 2016; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2018) and how we use the term 'informal agency' (Martin 2006). We thus contend that there is multidisciplinary theoretical backing to IPA administrative styles and their explanations. This theoretical foundation is neither homogenous nor easily subsumable under some grand theory. Rather, it is driven by the empirical phenomenon instead of a certain disciplinary tradition, and it adopts a decisively problem-oriented, middle-range perspective.

Lastly, in their third critique of administrative style, C&Y take issue with a supposed lack of conceptual attention to the 'political'. On the one hand, we would argue there are inherently political aspects to the 'challenges' IPAs face[7]; but, on the other hand, C&Y have correctly detected that politics are not the focus of our research interest. However, the fact that they view this as particularly problematic is quite revealing. Their lament that the styles concept, and the other aspects discussed in this paper, do not pay sufficient attention to the political is a further testament to the narrow perspectives C&Y take by overlooking the burgeoning literature on IPAs outside the disciplinary boundaries of PA. In IR literature, IPAs have long been discarded as actors, but not as a subject of political processes. In fact, the entirety of Principal Agent scholars is concerned precisely with the (politics) of controlling IOs, that is, their IPAs. It is for this reason that we decided to flip the perspective and look consciously and decisively at IPAs, i.e., the other end of this bargain. This is not ignoring politics; to the contrary, we are convinced that we need to know about all the players in the field first before explaining the whole of the game.

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7 Especially the political challenges are – as the name implies – political.

Behaviour

Next to autonomy and style, a third research effort attempts to relate the behaviour of IPAs to their staff. In their paper, C&Y describe our studies in this regard as being 'overly structural'. Our response would be that this might or might not be true. The probe is empirical, not theoretical, and thus not a matter to be stated *a priori*. In certain situations, organisational structures might matter only marginally; in other situations, they may be quite decisive. In situations of rapid change or crisis, existing structural arrangements tend to explain public governance processes much less than in situations that are stable. Our ambition has been to determine the conditions under which such factors matter in the life of IPAs. Moreover, C&Y wrongly assume that we merely 'read off' behaviour from bureaucratic structures. Our studies have determined causal relationships between structure and behaviour by the help of various data sets.

These studies have two larger ambitions beyond purely classifying, mapping, and measuring the behaviour of IPAs. The first is to theorise the organisational basis of politics, and thus how organisational factors bias and influence public governance processes (Egeberg and Trondal 2018). The second is to determine the conditions that might be conducive for the transformation of executive governance in the Westphalian state. To this end, studies of the European Commission, EU agencies, and other bodies have been important, as well as studying how these bodies interact with and shape governance processes within corresponding national administrative bodies.

General findings from our studies of IPAs suggest their compound nature, being able to mobilise a variety of decision-making dynamics that support their independence. One important finding is that international civil servants are strongly embedded in bureaucratic units, emphasising expert roles. But they also mobilise a supranational mind-set (Trondal and Veggeland 2014), with their national background playing little role in their everyday decision-making (Trondal 2010, p. 203). We illustrate the robustness of this finding by pointing to two cases: contracted staff in the European Commission, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

A large project studied contracted staff (seconded national experts − SNEs) in the European Commission and investigated the organisational basis for IPA governance (e.g. Trondal 2008; Trondal et al. 2008; Trondal et al. 2015; Murdoch and Trondal 2013). Briefly, the project argued that dynamics of public governance are reflected in the balancing acts government officials make between diverse concerns in everyday decision-making. It showed empirically that organisational factors strongly influence how civil servants perform this balancing act. The study thus contributed to one orthodox field of Public Administration research centred on understanding the dilemmas that government officials face between loyalty to politico-administrative leadership, departmental autonomy, and professional neutrality (Jacobsen 1960; Wilson 1989, p. 342; Verhoest et al. 2010; Christensen and Opstrup 2018). Moreover, this triangular behavioural repertoire is increasingly accompanied by a fourth component in the case of European governance: supranational representation. Officials in the European Commission strive constantly to balance these four representational tasks (Hooghe 2005; Egeberg 2006). Similar behavioural conflicts, in varying combinations, are found in other international bureaucracies. Based on

survey and interview data on a sample of SNEs, this study illuminated two key findings: First, SNEs tend to evoke a tripartite representational repertoire consisting of departmental, epistemic, and supranational behavioural patterns. Intergovernmental behaviour is barely emphasised. Secondly, the composite mix of representational behaviour reflects the organisational boundaries and hierarchies in which they are embedded. Crucially, a key demographic background factor like nationality seems to have only modest impact on temporary officials' behaviour. Moreover, recent studies of Commission officials support these findings, notably how the organisational structuring of the Commission apparatus affects the behavioural patterns among both permanent and temporary staff (Suvarierol 2008; Trondal 2008; Murdoch and Trondal 2013). Behaviour that transcends the imperative logic of representation is also seen within the College of Commissioners (Egeberg 2006), among top Commission officials (Hooghe 2005; Ellinas and Suleiman 2008; Suvarierol 2008; Kassim et al. 2013), and among the vast majority of national officials who attend Commission and Council committees (Egeberg et al. 2003). Supranational, departmental, and epistemic behavioural patterns are also observed within the secretariats of other international bureaucracies, such as the WTO and the OECD secretariats (Trondal et al. 2010). Hence, the organisational dimension of behaviour among IPA officials seems to be a robust one.

The second case is a more recent study of the IAEA (Trondal 2017b) that demonstrates that organisational capacities and bureaucratic structures of IPAs enable IOs to act independently (Trondal 2017c). This study shows how IPAs in practice may enjoy independence, particularly in terms of mobilising their own agenda separately from member-state governments. This observation is particularly telling since the IAEA secretariat is embedded in a classical intergovernmental organisation and operates in the highly sensitive policy area of nuclear power; secretarial activism is found against these odds.

Despite the IAEA being an intergovernmental organisation, this study also shows actor-level independence among the secretariat's staff. The study finds that civil servants in the IAEA secretariat enjoy discretion and room to manoeuvre when preparing and making plans, reports, and strategies. In developing such documents, the study observes profound secretarial activism. This gives administrative staff opportunities to influence the goals, ambitions, working rules and priority areas under which they will work. So, to the extent that administrative staff are guided by rules, it is also likely that they influence the very development of those rules. As such, IPA staff also influence meta-governance. Moreover, the IAEA secretariat uses discretion when deciding *how* they should do the work specified in these documents. The plans and strategies should therefore be seen as flexible frameworks which, in practice, leave civil servants room to manoeuvre. In sum, the study offers two main lessons: (i) Civil servants in IPAs may contribute to develop organisational strategies and plans, and (ii) this regulatory framework leaves manoeuvring room for civil servants when work tasks have to be executed.

The study also shows that the organisational structure *inside* the IAEA secretariat shapes how this room to manoeuvre is interpreted and applied. This 'room' varies as expected between staff at different levels of rank and in different units. Staff in lower

pay grades experience greater room for manoeuvre and thus greater capacity to apply discretion than officials in higher pay grades. Moreover, civil servants are not particularly focused towards the IAEA organisation as a whole, but rather towards their own sub-units and professions. This ´local´ behavioural orientation contributes to a 'silo logic,' whereby civil servants´ focus on their own work tasks and projects, rather than the wider political context in which the IAEA operates. Staff thus develop local rationality and myopic learning, which in turn narrows their perception of their room for manoeuvre.

Even though this study primarily illustrates that IPAs may enjoy considerable leeway, it does not reduce the role of member-states to nothing. On the one hand, the relationship between the IAEA and the member-states is described by the respondents as supportive. The study also reports that member-states are vital in political representation within the political bodies of the IAEA in which they collectively set the premises for the organisation as a whole, including the IAEA secretariat. In sum, the study probes the merit of an organisational approach to the study of the nuts and bolts of IPA behaviour. Yet, IPA governance is not 'overly structural', it is significantly affected by organisational factors.

Is the Public Service Bargains concept the solution for alleged IPA research deficits?

C&Y go beyond merely criticising existing our research on IPAs. They also suggest a specific PA approach, Public Service Bargains (PSB), which they argue is better suited to cope with the IPA phenomena under study (C&Y, p. 13).

Public Service Bargains is a set of ideas developed by Martin Lodge and Christopher Hood to conceive of models of varying bureaucracy-politics relationships that imply different underlying 'bargains' or modes of interaction between politicians and public servants (Hood and Lodge 2006). C&Y propose three new modes of such bargains, namely expertise-based, representational, and multi-level bargains as particularly interesting avenues for further IPA analysis. They claim these ideal-types allow one to focus especially on types and configurations 'that can be seen as particularly relevant to IPAs' (C&Y, p. 8).

We have no doubts that C&Y's internationalised PSB ideal-types could be usefully applied to IPA analysis, and we encourage scholars to further develop the concepts and answer C&Y's call for more research using this framework. We do not believe, however, that C&Y have *convincingly shown* their version of PSB as *superior* to our efforts of understanding IPA, mainly for three reasons.

First, C&Y are themselves incoherent about the status of PSB compared to IPA research in general, and our IPA studies in particular. The authors implicitly present PSB as the better 'alternative' (C&Y, p. 13). They refer regularly to IPA autonomy, style, and behaviour as phenomena that could be better understood (in terms of scope conditions, theoretical foundation, systematic empirical analysis) using PSB. But while C&Y repeatedly cite the *potentials* of their suggested types of PSB—to 'improve the

existing understanding' (p. 11), 'contribute to existing literature' (p. 12) and 'contribute to our understanding' (p. 13), they do not establish or demonstrate this potential through any empirical material or illustrative case study. In other words, C&Y's claim that these types constitute an 'alternative' to our empirical work (which has already been conducted and can be critically reviewed in terms of its descriptive and explanatory value) remains vague and unfounded.

Second, while C&Y positively emphasise the more generic character of PSB, they seem to overlook that PSB concepts alone—even in the version they advance—lack adequate predictive or explanatory power. Expertise-based, representational or multi-level PSB alone are unable to generate systematic hypotheses or conceptualise empirical measurements of intra-organisational characteristics or IPA behaviour for comparative explanatory analysis. The advantage and outspoken aim of our IPA autonomy, style, and behavioural-organisational approach, by contrast, is precisely to facilitate such work and enable subsequent empirical testing.

Third, we see an essential ontological difference between C&Y's version of PSB and our IPA concepts. As we have conceptualised the latter, IPA autonomy, style, and behaviour are meant to be steps in a causal chain that eventually aims to explain policy outputs. Questions regarding the *relationship* between bureaucratic characteristics and administrative policy impact are our central concern. PSB—at least in the argumentation of C&Y—remains a largely descriptive approach to capture *differences in the interaction modus between politicians and bureaucrats* at the international level. It does not produce systematic analytical leverage to solve questions about output, let alone outcome. This is not a problem per se; different concepts and approaches operate at different levels and in different ways. But our point is that PSB operates on a different analytical level than our conceptual framework. PSB focuses only on strategic interaction between two highly stylised groups, i.e., politicians on the one side, bureaucrats on the other. It is thus reductionist both in its dyadic approach and in its assumed calculating ontology of human behaviour and organisational dynamics.

In sum and not to be misunderstood: PSB offers some clear benefits, but while it is a helpful research frame, it has insufficient explanatory power by itself and its scope conditions remain unclear. Moreover, PSB is located at a different level of abstraction than our concepts, raises quite different research questions, and suggests different analytical foci to solve them. One may be able to link expertise-based, representational, and multi-level bargains types with autonomy, style, or behavioural IPA analyses. But, in our opinion, the latter are better suited to answer questions regarding systematic implications for policy outputs. Perhaps the most pertinent question then is not *whether* PSB is a better 'alternative', but *for what purpose.* Ultimately, the adjudication of which approach is better will be determined by comparing their relative performance in actual IPA research. In empirical studies as in proverbs, the proof of the pudding lies, ultimately, in the eating.

Outlook

We appreciate Johan Christensen and Kutsal Yesilkagit's efforts to stimulate the debate about IPAs and constructively critique our research in the area. Many questions in this field remain open and our own efforts to analyse IPAs are but imperfect attempts to advance our knowledge and understanding. We are thus grateful for the authors' engagement with our work, but we disagree with most of their arguments. In this rejoinder, we have attempted to outline the basis of our disagreement. For us, the dialogue will have been a productive one so long as it advances discussion in this still developing, but profoundly relevant area of research. Most of all, we would point to both Christensen and Yesilkagit's article and our modest response as testimonial to the vibrancy and dynamism of scholarship examining international and transnational administration and governance.

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