

Constitutions and the Application of Public Management Reforms: Formulating a Research Agenda

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Introduction

Since constitutional aspects of public management reforms are rarely debated, scholars and politicians alike end up underestimating two fundamental problems in modern democratic political systems. The first concerns the effects that public management policies may have on power allocation within and outside the public sphere. Here the lack of critical analysis and debate concerns the fact that seemingly technical adjustments of the government's tool box may end up changing the power allocation among actors vertically as well as horizontally. The second perspective, and the one to be discussed in this paper, concerns the reverse relationship, i.e. how constitutions influence public management policy reforms. The last decades have resulted in a global spread of ideas regarding how governments should manage public authorities and the public sector. While a number of states have embraced the same type of policies at approximately the same time the exact policy application is, however, far

from uniform (see below). Attempts have been made to find systematic co-variation and in the long run to explain public management model application, but few distinct patterns and/or concrete variables have so far come to surface (cf Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011).

In this paper we aim at identifying constitutional variables to explain the variation of how specific public management tools are applied in different contexts. Our main interest concerns the relationship between the administrative institutional set-up on the one hand (also called administrative traditions in the literature), and the type of public management reforms introduced in different countries on the other. For example, not all countries have experienced privatization of traditionally public sector tasks, but some have. And, not all countries have implemented public policy reforms aimed at empowering citizens or clients, but some have. That some public management policies are possible in Great Britain but hard to accomplish in Germany can to some extent be attributed to these countries' different administrative traditions. In practice this means that the one-size fits all rhetoric surrounding ideas under the so called New Public Management (NPM) umbrella must be questioned. We however need to construct a detailed and precise framework for structured and focused comparisons of specific NPM-reforms in different constitutional settings. This type of more focused, structured comparisons is for some reason still rare in the otherwise empirically rich research on public management reform. We are, however, convinced of the necessity to make comparisons at this level, and strongly suspect that it provides more valid conclusions regarding the relationship between the administrative set-up and the susceptibility to NPM-reforms. In this paper we will present a preliminary version of such a framework.

This paper starts with an introduction to the type of public management reforms that constitute the potential dependent variables in the type of comparative studies we are interested in. The following section is a brief inventory of the type of explanatory frameworks that have already been applied in this line of research. We then turn to our own suggestions regarding how to build a framework that is precise enough to enable actual empirical studies, and generic enough to enable fruitful comparisons. In our concluding remarks, we discuss in brief strategies aimed at narrowing down comparative scopes in order to ensure valid comparisons.

Contemporary Public Management Reforms

On a very general level public management policies can be said to target all public policy making, and a wide array of tools for steering and monitoring public and private actors in these processes. When Pollitt and Summa (1997) identify dimensions of contemporary public management reform, they find that both new and old management ideas are present in actual policy making. Their list contains privatization; marketization; decentralization (within the state as well as between national and sub-national levels); output orientation (e.g., performance oriented budgeting and steering), and traditional restructuring (governments lean on traditional restructuring, 'tidying up'). Peters' list of contemporary reforms covers to a great extent the same type of phenomena: privatization and deregulation; personnel management; financial management targeting costs; market style customer orientation; empowerment of civil servants and clients, and deconcentration/decentralization (Peters, 2000).

While it has, of course, always been possible to decentralize/centralize or to use financial management tools to govern, specific applications of these classic tools are found in a (still very broadly defined) sub-set of public management policies called *New Public Management* (NPM). Hood identifies seven doctrinal NPM components. These are in relative terms concrete applications to the public sphere of ideas originally formulated in relation to the management of private organizations. These are efforts to turn public sector organizations into 'corporatized units organized by product'; contract-based steering, internal markets and term contracts; 'private sector style management'; focus on discipline and costs/use of resources; 'hands on' top management; focus on measurable performances and output (Hood 1995). Besides offering specific claims regarding the ideas and practices introduced, Hood's categorization also specifies what ideas and practices that may be crowded out. For example, if a government puts emphasis on 'explicit formal measurable standards and measures of performance and success' they commonly justify this with reference to a need of efficiency, and the logic is that accountability requires 'clearly stated goals'. This model is, however, likely to replace 'qualitative and implicit standards and norms', which leads to the 'erosion of self-management by professionals'. The doctrine that puts 'greater emphasis on output controls' is commonly justified by the need for results in the public sector and will effectively replace 'stress on procedure and control by collibration' (i.e. classical political skills like managing tensions between opposing forces in a social arena through government intervention). In practice, performance is to determine resource allocation, also on the individual level (i.e. in pay for performance schemes) (Hood 1995, p. 96).

So far we can distinguish two main traits when it comes to NPM-influenced reforms, ‘marketization’ and ‘corporatization’. The former is concerned with the assignment of tasks between the public and private sectors, i.e. to construct market-like conditions between public sector organizations, private businesses and citizens (new vocabulary for the latter: ‘consumers’ or ‘users’). The underlying idea is to induce greater efficiency and quality through competition. The ‘corporatization’-strand, however, is concerned with the internal structures, systems and courses of action of the administrative apparatus. It is focused on making managerial know-how one of the central elements of public management, e.g. managerial ideas (‘let managers manage’), setting up organizational subdivisions as result units as well as introducing internal debt management etc. Both of these strands hold a strong result orientation, and the goal is to achieve cost effectiveness and greater efficiency. Moreover, in a comparative perspective different strands of NPM-reforms have been implemented with varying strength in different countries (Pollitt and Bouckhaert, 2011). This is an observation that is of great interest to us; what makes a country more or less prone to adopt different strands of NPM ideas? How do they choose within these broad categories? Does the institutional set up matter?

Understanding Public Management Choices

In this section we will take a closer look at some of the attempts already made to explain why contemporary administrative reform varies between countries.

Categorizing Countries

We will start with some suggestions as to how countries can be classified in terms of how radical or far-reaching the reforms introduced have been. Van Thiel concludes that there have been several studies into the pattern of the diffusion of NPM in different countries (e.g. Ongaro, 2009; Gualmini, 2008; Kettl, 2000; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011; Christensen and Lægreid, 2003; Hood, 1995). Even though different labels are used for the patterns identified in this literature two patterns are almost always mentioned: a) the radical reforms in the Anglo-Saxon countries (UK, Australia, New Zealand), and b) the more incremental approach in Continental Europe. Other patterns are sometimes mentioned, but with varying labels and descriptions. For example, Kettl (2000) refers to a group of “hybrid” reformers, in this case the Nordic countries (Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway). However, in other studies the Nordic countries are usually included in the group of incremental reformers. Christensen and Lægreid (2003) even call Norway a “reluctant” reformer. Other alternative the clustering of

countries based on their legal tradition: Germanic, Nordic and Southern European (or Napoleonic) countries (Peters, 2008).

Attempts to Identify Explanatory Variables

Turning then to explanatory factors of importance in the literature on contemporary administrative reform, formal as well as informal institutions have been identified as independent variables. For example, normative ideas have to some extent been tried out as candidates for explaining administrative change (cf Wise 2002), as have cultural factors influencing the propensity to embrace individual evaluation and sanctioning schemes attached to some of the performance management models applied (Pollitt 2006). In an early attempt to explain how NPM has been applied in different national contexts, Hood argued that '[a]s with the disappearance of the dinosaurs, there is no single accepted explanation of this alleged paradigm shift. In fact, emerging explanations roughly parallel the major contending theories of the dinosaurs' extinction' (Hood 1995, 94). Hood points the reader towards explanatory factors such as new technology; the external shock of new liberal ideas, and 'predators' as in 'accounting firms and management consultants' (ibid., p. 95). The conclusion is that 'conventional explanations' can not be sustained, e.g. neither party politics nor fiscal stress can explain the variation observed. Still, context matters in so much as to embrace NPM-ideas, the current state of affairs 'must provide both *motive* and *opportunity*' (ibid., 105). High motive and high opportunity is said to be found in countries with collective service provisions and an integrated public service. That is, when the public sphere is big, the need to reform will *ceteris paribus* be bigger (motive); and where it is easy to control the public sector, reforms will be easier to accomplish (opportunity). Sweden is said to be a typical high/high case. In contrast, a typical case of low motive and low opportunity is the US (ibid., 105).

Repeated attempts have been made to try to understand the diffusion of NPM from an institutional point of view. Constitutional variables have been studied as possible explanations to the observed variation in public management model application. Pollitt and Summa (1997) argue to have found empirical support for the claim that constitutional variables are determinants of public management application when comparing the frontier implementers of NPM-reforms (UK & New Zealand) to Sweden and Finland (not far behind, but more moderate). They argue that the basic form of the political system appears to matter for public management change. The authors stress that both the UK and New Zealand are centralized states where the powers of single party central governments to force through change are subject to few restraints. That is, constitutionally central government dominates local

government and there is no tradition of powerful autonomous agencies within the state sector, which is the case in Sweden and Finland. Hence, the Swedish and Finnish political systems differ fundamentally from this Westminster model, since local government is well protected from central government interference. Moreover, the usual style of central government operations in the two latter cases was consensual or corporatist (in contrast to the majoritarian style of the UK and NZ), which e.g. is suggested to include extensive bargaining with organized interest groups (Pollitt and Summa, 1997). The authors, thus, conclude:

“[T]he most convincing explanations of the trajectories observed in our four countries appears to rest not on economic performance or party doctrines at all but, rather, upon the characteristics of the political and administrative systems already in place. It was these system characteristics which most significantly influenced what was possible in terms of the scope, process and speed of reform. In this sense we suggest that institutional explanations of public management changes are somewhat more powerful than either party political or economic explanations, though both of the latter also contribute something to the course of events.” (ibid., 15)

To conclude, it certainly seems worthwhile and constructive to consider institutional variables when analyzing the diffusion of NPM in different countries. However, as a foundation for a comparative analysis we suspect that the suggested variables – type of political system and degree of centralization – are a bit too general, and we need develop and extend these variables further to capture any real variation. Pollitt and Summa’s conclusion that the details of the institutions already in place are of great importance for administrative reforms introduced in a specific setting needs to be taken seriously.

Attempts to identify comprehensive models of administrative settings have been made. Peters has identified four distinct *administrative models* that are claimed to explain the reform choices made in different Western democracies. These ‘traditions’ are ‘clusters of institutions and cultural practices that constitute a set of expectations about behavior’ (Peters 2000, 2). In other words, the notion of tradition does involve what people, especially political and administrative elites, think about administration, but it also involves a number of institutional features of public administration, as well as the relationships between state and society in administering public policies. Some of the dimensions are constitutional in the formal/legal meaning of the word, while others are not. The four traditions are summarized in table 1 below.

Table 1: Key Features of Four State Traditions

	Anglo-Saxon	Germanic	French	Scandinavian
Is there a legal basis for the “State”?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
State-society relations	pluralistic	organicist	antagonistic	organicist
Form of political organization	Limited federalist	integral/organic federalist	jacobin, “one and indivisible”	decentralized unitary
Basis of policy style	incrementalist	“muddling through”	corporatist legal	technocratic consensual
Form of decentralization	“State power” (US); local government (UK)	legal cooperative federalism	regionalized unitary state	strong local autonomy
Dominant approach to discipline of public administration	political science/sociology	public law	public law	public law (Sweden); organization theory (Norway)
Countries	UK; US; Canada (but not Quebec); Ireland	Germany; Austria; Netherlands; Spain (after 1978); Belgium (after 1988)	France; Italy; Spain (until 1978); Portugal; Quebec; Greece; Belgium (until 1988)	Sweden, Norway, Denmark

Comment: This table is built on Peters 2000 (cf Peters, 2008).

As can be noted, two of Peters’ dimensions are similar to Pollitt and Summa’s, i.e. ‘Form of political organization’ and ‘Form of Decentralization’. When it comes to ‘State-society relations’ it encompasses both a macro- and micro-perspective. If we start with the former, in the organic conception the state is assumed to be linked from its inception with society, and

the two entities have little meaning apart from each other. This conception of the state and its role in governance can be contrasted with a contractarian notion in which the state arose from a conscious contract, expressed through a constitution or other constitutive arrangements, between the members of the society and the institutions that will govern them (Peters, 2008). In the other aspect of state and society relations, Peters argues that these are directly relevant for the day-to-day operations of government and public administration. This is a relationship which defines the role that societal actors can legitimately play in making and implementing public policies. E.g. some state, and administrative, traditions grant a legitimate position to societal interests, and have attempted to integrate social actors into the policy process as aids and complements to state power.

Another dimension that is included in Peters' analysis is the legal basis of the state, which might be appropriate for our purposes. E.g. one fundamental difference between the Anglo-Saxon and the other models is that while the latter all have a legal conception of the state as such, the former does not. A legal definition of the state will in practice bring about constitutional provisions regarding the relationship between public and private, and on intra-public relationships such as the one between politics and bureaucracy. It will perhaps also *a priori* formulate explicit conditions concerning the legitimacy of public decision-making, also regarding decisions made on the output-side of the democratic system. And, as pointed out by Peters, the way in which the state is perceived and legitimized will affect the role of the civil service. This is no small detail in the type of policy procedures we discuss here, since civil servants can be both targets of reform, and its implementing actors. However, it is unfortunately not apparent how e.g. a legal basis for the state will affect the dynamics of public management reform. The same problems exist with the aforementioned dimensions.

Attempts to Make Concepts Measurable

Even though rich on ideas and categorizations, a general problem in the field of comparative public administration has been an underdevelopment of theory and conceptions. While there are important examples of possible theoretical contributions to a comparative approach, little guidance is given in terms of how to transfer these theoretical constructs to operationalised dimensions for actual empirical analysis. A researcher who provides both concepts and empirical guidance is Knill (1999). He starts out acknowledging that in order to connect empirical materials horizontally across national boundaries, they must also be connected vertically (ibid., 113). This being said, he also concludes that in the field of public administration, the development of such concepts for comparison is particularly problematic,

given the complexity and diversity of its phenomena. He addresses this problem by developing the concept of *administrative reform capacity* to capture the structural potential for administrative reforms across countries. The point of departure is that the national capacity for administrative reforms depends on the number of formal and factual institutional veto-points administrative actors have at their disposal in order to influence and resist reform initiatives from both politicians and society. These veto points in turn, Knill argues, is significantly affected by the specific macro-institutional provisions, and he points at state traditions as well as the legal and political-administrative system. Hence, administrative reform capacity is connected to two ideal constellations of low and high reform capacity, implying either an *autonomous* or an *instrumental* position of the bureaucracy with respect to external pressures for adaptation. The position of a national bureaucracy is characterized as autonomous, if weak executive leadership coincides with high institutional entrenchment of administrative structures and procedures as well as a powerful position of the administration with respect to the formulation and implementation of political programs. By contrast, an administration's position can be characterized as instrumental if it is confronted with strong executive leadership, weak institutional entrenchment of administrative structures and procedures, and a low level of independent influence on policy formulation and implementation (Knill 1999). Several analytical categories are introduced to specify the concept of administrative reform capacity, which are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: The Reformability of Administrative Systems: Two Ideal Types

	Autonomous Administration	Instrumental Administration
Administrative Reform Capacity	Low	High
Strength of the Executive Leadership	Fragmented	Integrated
Entrenchment of Administrative Arrangements	High	Low
Political Influence of the Bureaucracy	High	Low
Patterns of Administrative Change	Incremental self-adaptation	Deliberate reform from outside

Source: Knill 1999, 117.

The first indicator of administrative reform capacity in a country – ‘Strength of the Executive Leadership’ – is connected to the general reform capacity associated with a certain political system. This aspect has in earlier research been referred to as the strength of executive leadership, which increases with the centralization and concentration of political power which in turn is affected by the existence or absence of institutional veto-points provided by constitutional principles, the state structure, the party system, patterns of administrative interest intermediation as well as internal organization of government (ibid., 115, see also Pollitt 2006).

The second indicator captures the number of institutional veto-points with respect to administrative reforms, and these in turn are affected by the degree to which administrative structures and procedures are entrenched in a broader institutional framework. In other words, it is more difficult to implement administrative reforms from above if administrative activity is based on legal and formal requirements as well as the comprehensiveness and fragmentation of administrative structures (ibid.). The third indicator of administrative reform capacity in a country – ‘Political Influence of the Bureaucracy’ refers to the extent to which administrative actors are able to shape the outcome of policy formulation and implementation in accordance with their interests. The expectation is, thus, that the likelihood of fundamental administrative reforms to decrease with the level of autonomy that subordinate administrative levels enjoy when actually implementing political decisions on administrative reforms (Knill, 1999, 116).

We regard Knill’s theoretical concepts as fruitful given the fact that they are generic enough to be applied in broad comparisons, and distinct enough to inspire and enable focused comparative designs. This is why we when we present our own preliminary framework in the section below will draw on Knill’s concept of administrative reform capacity.

Constitutions and Administrative Reforms, a tentative Framework

This section is dedicated to the development of a framework for structured and focused comparisons with the aim of studying how constitutions matter for administrative reforms. We will discuss the most important decision to be made in designing such studies, starting with the definition of the dependent variable(s).

The brief exposé of earlier research on public management reforms and institutional explanations presented above illustrates two problems that need to be addressed in any attempt to perform comparative research on constitutional aspects of political reforms. First, it

is apparent that the dependent variable in such comparisons needs to be defined with high precision, and this without undermining the chances of capturing the most interesting variation in applications of specific public management tools. For our purposes, too broad definitions of reforms, e.g. NPM-reforms, or privatization, will not suffice. One first distinction to be made is the one between NPM-reforms that are aimed toward marketization and corporatization respectively. This is mainly due to the fact that respective category will challenge different sets of actors, and – when such exists – different types of laws and formal procedures. An additional step of major importance is to be clear over what kind of variation that is to be identified, described and explained. For example, Knill's (1999) ambition can be understood as the aim to identify the institutional factors that explain the characteristics of reform processes rather than the content and/or outcome of reforms. The extreme values on the reform-variable are said to be 'piece-meal' and 'revolutionary' change respectively. Knill, however, also defines the dependent variable in terms of 'incremental self-adaptation' and 'deliberate reform from the outside', i.e. he distinguishes between the most influential actors, or perhaps arenas, for change.

We are convinced that it is both relevant and possible to study also the content of reforms in different contexts. Such comparative ambitions will benefit from identifying specific reform programs or 'tools' within the broad marketization and corporatization categories described above. Such a strategy will, however, limit both the number of countries to include in the comparison, and in turn, the possible explanatory variables.

Turning to our main independent variables, our preliminary framework draws quite heavily on Knill (1999). However, we find it fruitful to develop some of the analytical dimensions, and it is also important to challenge some of the assumptions on which they appear to rest. We suggest two main adjustments to Knill's theory. The first is to expand the framework to include not only top-down but also bottom-up reform processes. One of Knill's assumptions appears to be that the reform pressure that may or may not successfully penetrate the public administration is external to the latter. The origins of change, or the norm entrepreneurs, are not the civil servants, but rather the politicians. This is in most policy areas a questionable hypothesis, and perhaps in this particular policy area even more so.

The second adjustment concerns Knill's focus on veto points, institutional entrenchment and bureaucratic autonomy. This way of categorizing reform capacity is most obviously fruitful when we presuppose some degree of conflict within a particular policy area. Defined in general terms, i.e. as in Knill's 'Strength of the Executive Leadership'-dimension, veto points

only matter, or matter more, when a policy issue is contested. Knill's two other administrative reform capacity-dimensions, i.e. entrenchment of administrative arrangements and political influence of the bureaucracy, to some extent takes care of the need to be issue-specific when applying veto point-theories. The idea is that a high degree of entrenchment, as well as highly autonomous bureaucracies, make it hard for external reforms to be implemented. From our point of view this part of the theory is over-specified. One of our doubts concerns the actual effects of high degrees of entrenchment and autonomy. On the one hand it seems reasonable to hypothesize that things that are described, regulated and protected in distinct formal institutions (e.g. in laws) are harder to change than things that are not. Since constitutions are commonly hard to revise, we could expect public management reforms to be in general less common and effective in countries where the role of public authorities or other reform targets are regulated in the constitution. Or, we could expect that some types of reforms, i.e. those with a specific content, will have smaller chances of being successful than others. Another possibility is, however, that in countries where public management policies are commonly regulated formally, and this with reference to fundamental laws, constitutions have a threshold-effect on reform. Passing this threshold turn reform issues into products of the legislative process and give them a certain formal status. The legislative process as such will hence, once started, give the reform momentum and enhance its possibilities to succeed.

Moreover, we doubt that the effect of entrenchment is 'content-free'. On this note, we have decided to incorporate Pollitt and Summa's conclusion that current institutional features are important in determining the form, prospects and possibly content of administrative reforms (Pollitt and Summa 1997). We will refer to this idea in terms of goodness of fit, a concept commonly used in Europeanization studies to describe the similarities/dissimilarities between EU and national policies and institutions (see e.g. Mastebroek and Van Keulen 2006). What this variable captures is the costs associated with a reform in terms of institutional change required. It is possible that entrenchment facilitates change if the suggested reform constitute small or no costs.

Our framework is an attempt to build upon Knill's Administrative Reform Capacity-dimensions, but in doing this we aim at avoiding the kind of over-specification that we believe Knill's version represents. Hence we:

- do not assume that public administration reform is a contested policy area, which means that we can expect to find revolutionary administrative reforms also in highly fragmented political systems;

- do not assume that reform pressure is external to the bureaucracy;
- do not assume that entrenchment *ceteris paribus* is an obstacle for administrative reform, but rather that the effect is dependent upon the ‘fit’ of the institutions involved in the reform,
- do not assume that requirements for formal regulation or law-making makes reform processes less successful or the outcome less dramatic than when the public management policies are informal;
- do not assume that autonomous bureaucracies use their autonomy to preserve *status quo*.

Our framework can in its present form be presented as a list of variables, as in table 3 below:

Table 3 Constitutions and administrative reforms

Dependent variables	Independent variables
Reform target variables	Administrative reform capacity
- marketization (sub categories)	- veto points in political system
- corporatization (sub categories)	- level of conflict in policy area
	- level of conflict policy issue
	- entrenchment of administrative arrangements
	- institutional fit between current and proposed administrative arrangement
	- bureaucratic autonomy
	- civil servants’ policy preferences
Reform processes, characteristics	
- external/internal pressure	
- incremental/revolutionary	

A comprehensive operationalization of our framework still needs to be worked out. This task involves identifying the type of ‘arrangements’ that are entrenched or not, and that are of relevance for specific reform targets. For example, corporatization of state bureaucracies can be hypothesized to be affected by the current arrangements regarding the civil service, e.g.

how bureaucrats enter and exit civil service, how they are paid, and to what extent the civil service is distinctly separated from political careers. Regarding the bureaucratic autonomy concept, we find it fruitful to use Verhoest et al's multi-dimensional autonomy concept, which points out towards both ex ante provisions of autonomy (such as the legal status of state authorities) and steering tools that determine the operative room for manoeuvre in the daily business of state administrations (Verhoest et al 2004).

In sum we acknowledge the importance of veto points, but regard the issue of particular interests as an empirical issue to be studied in precise detail. We also hypothesize that the effects of both entrenchment and bureaucratic autonomy can be the opposite of the negative one assumed in Knill's theory. Let us end this section with the case of administrative reform in Sweden, since this case illustrates the need to avoid the kind of overly specified theorizing that links e.g. bureaucratic autonomy to a specific policy preference.

We can identify two dependent variables using the categorizations in table 3. The first is that state level reforms concerned the introduction of corporatization tools, i.e. performance management models. The pressure for reforms did, however, not come from the political side of government, but rather from within the civil service (Sundström 2003). We are currently not sure how to categorize the reform in terms of whether it was incremental or revolutionary. We do know that performance management was introduced on a large scale and in a one size fits all-style during a short period of time (Wockelberg & Ahlbäck Öberg 2013). The reform was, hence, not a modest affair, it does not in retrospect appear to have been executed in small steps or to have been in Knill's words 'patchy' (Knill 1999).

Table 4 Explaining Performance Management Reform, the example of Sweden

Independent variables	Swedish case
Administrative reform capacity	
- veto points in political system)	high number of veto points
- level of conflict in policy area	low
- level of conflict policy issue	low
- entrenchment of administrative arrangements	high degree of entrenchment
- institutional fit between current and proposed administrative arrangement	good?
- bureaucratic autonomy	high
- civil servants' policy preferences	important actors <i>pro</i>

Regarding the independent variables (see table 4), we know that while the Swedish political system is highly fragmented, the level conflict over public management policies and performance management reform, is low (Wockelberg 2003). Further, while the degree of institutional entrenchment is high, performance management reforms can possible be said to fit the (at the time) existing administrative arrangements quite nicely. Performance management builds in part of agentification and extensive delegation to sub-levels of the state apparatus, and in Sweden this meant to do 'more of the same'. The bureaucracy is highly autonomous, and could use this autonomy to work for, rather than against, a policy that not only suited important actors well, apparently these actors were also the policy entrepreneurs behind the reforms (Sundström 2003).

Concluding Remarks

A research agenda aimed at understanding why administrative reforms vary in form, content and success between different countries will require serious attempts to identify constitutional concepts that are generic and possible to measure in different contexts. The greatest of many

challenges inherited in this task is to move beyond dichotomies such as whether public management policies are formally regulated or not, and to find ways of capturing also the content of formal/informal arrangements. The most fruitful strategy will probably be to narrow the comparison in terms of countries and/or specific reforms/steering tools to be included. It seems unlikely that the same constitutional variables or institutional settings will be able to explain changes in both marketization attempts and reforms that aim at corporatization of public organizations. One strategy is, hence, to study one specific type of public management model in a smaller group of countries. It is for example relevant to study corporatization reforms that introduce performance management regimes in different countries, with the precise aim of explaining differences in the application of performance management models. Performance contracts between governments and state authorities have been introduced in many countries, but the type of contracts introduced appears to vary when it comes to their focus and whether the contracts targets individuals (i.e. top management of authorities) or not.

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