

Modern Management Tools in Norwegian State Agencies: Regulation Inside Government or Shopping Basket?

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Preface

This paper is part of the research project «Regulation, Control and Auditing», funded by the Norwegian Research Council. Earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference «A Performing Public Sector: The Second Transatlantic Dialogue», Workshop on «Performance of Regulation and Regulation of Performance», Leuven 1–3 June 2006; and at the «Regulation, Inspection and Improvement Conference», «Soft Law, Soft Regulation? – The Implications for Regulatory Practice», University of Cambridge, 13 September 2006. We would like to thank the participants at the workshops for valuable comments.

Summary

This paper focuses on the broad package of modern management tools that are used by Norwegian state organizations. These tools are regarded as forms of regulation inside government as well as a shopping basket. We describe the range of different tools and look at how intensively they are used and how they are interrelated. We also examine variations in use of these tools by different state organizations. The database is a survey addressed to all organizations in the Norwegian civil service, apart from the ministries, in 2004. Our theoretical approach is primarily based on neo-institutional theory. Our main empirical findings are that the use of modern management tools is widespread; that some are very common while others are more marginal; that there are different families of tools that supplement each other; that there is significant variation in the use of different tools; and that agency size is the most important factor in explaining the use of different tools.

Sammendrag

Dette notatet fokuserer på den store pakken av styringsverktøy som blir brukt i norske sentrale forvaltningsorgan. Disse virkemidlene kan oppfattes som ulike interne reguleringsformer eller som en handlekorg av populære standarder for moderne organisasjoner. Vi beskriver variasjonsbredden og omfanget av ulike virkemidler og i hvilken grad de er supplerende eller alternative metoder. Vi undersøker også i hvor stor grad de benyttes i ulike typer forvaltningsorganer. Det teoretiske utgangspunktet er hovedsakelig ny-institusjonell teori. Det empiriske grunnlaget er en spørreundersøkelse til alle sentrale forvaltningsorganer utenom departementene som ble gjennomført i 2004. Vi viser at det er stor bruk av slike moderne styringsverktøy i norsk sentraladministrasjon. Noen er svært vanlige mens andre er mer sjeldne. Det er ulike familier av virkemidler som supplerer hverandre, og det er stor variasjon i bruk av ulike virkemidler mellom ulike organisasjoner i sentraladministrasjonen. Organisasjonenes størrelse er den faktoren som forklarer mest av variasjonen i bruk av ulike virkemidler.

Introduction

In this paper we will focus on the broad package of modern management tools or techniques that may be used by Norwegian state organizations. Three types of questions will be discussed. The first relates to the range of tools and how widely they are being put to use. What is the content of the techniques? Which are the most popular techniques, and which techniques are more marginal?

The second type of question concerns the relationship between the tools. Are certain techniques connected to others? Which techniques might be described as a family, to what degree do they represent competing alternatives, and to what extent do they overlap and supplement one another? The final type of question addresses variations in the use of management tools by Norwegian state organizations. How can we explain variations in the number of techniques used and in which ones are chosen?

In some instances, certain types of management tools can be initiated by actors outside the organization, and can be seen as a way to carry out central regulation, control or steering of activities within government organizations towards a desirable standard, procedure, result or goal. Using different types of internal management tools is an indirect form of regulation inside government. Regulation is normally considered to be regulation by the state, but there is also a growing focus on regulation inside government carried out by a variety of public agencies that set standards and use different forms of performance management and compliance measures to audit government organizations' work (Hood et al. 1999, James 2000, Power 1997).

In other instances, the management tools can be initiated by the organization itself – owing to a wish to emulate organizational trends observed among similar actors or organizations in the environment, or for increasing local efficiency. Thus, state organizations may pick and choose for their shopping basket among available tools on the shelves, based on considerations on enhancing the legitimacy in their environment, or on instrumental goal attainment. Some of the tools may also imply regulation of activities within the organizations, introduced by actors outside the organization or as a form of self-regulation in the organization. Thus, regarding management tools as regulation inside government or as choices for a shopping basket may to some extent overlap.

We start by giving a brief outline of the Norwegian context and the database. The database used is a survey addressed to organizations in the Norwegian civil service in 2004 – i.e. organizations that are part of the state as a legal entity and report to one or more ministries. It excludes ministries, local government, state-owned companies and governmental foundations. We then go on to present some theoretical ideas, mainly based on neo-institutional theory, on the use of management tools as regulation inside government and as a shopping basket, and derive different hypotheses on the extent and variation of the adoption of tools among state organizations. The empirical part of the paper starts by presenting the full range of modern management tools and examining the connections between them. We then examine the variations in use of the

tools by agencies by using bivariate and multivariate analyses. In conclusion we outline our main empirical findings and discuss some implications.

The context

Norway is a small, unitary, parliamentary, and multi-party state. Since the early 1970s, it has mainly been ruled by minority governments, and since 1994 it has been connected to the EU through the Economic Area Agreement. In a comparative perspective, it has a strong democratic tradition, scores high on per capita income and abundance of natural resources, has relatively strong collectivistic and egalitarian values, is consensus-oriented and has well-developed corporatist arrangements. It also has one of the most comprehensive and universal welfare states in the world, with a large public sector. The relationships between parliament, ministers, and agencies are based on the principle of ministerial responsibility, meaning that the minister is responsible to the parliament for all activities in the ministry as well as in subordinate bodies within his or her policy area. Political control over the civil service has, however, been general and passive, allowing the executive a lot of leeway. This seems to reflect some major features of the political-administrative system: high levels of mutual trust and shared attitudes and norms among political and administrative leaders and within the public sector (Christensen and Læg Reid 2005). There is also a high degree of transparency and an open attitude to critical scrutiny by the media.

Agencies have been a major organizational form in the Norwegian central government for a long time. A main organizational principle is that technical issues and routine tasks should be handled by agencies, while policy and planning tasks should stay within the ministries. The dominant agency model in Norway has historically been rather unified, with little horizontal specialization (Christensen and Læg Reid 2004a). In most agencies administrative tasks, regulatory and control tasks, and service provision and production tasks have been combined and integrated. Traditionally, Norway has not had any type of administrative court. Appeals are directed to the parent ministry, which can also instruct the agencies. The idea that there ought to be separate agencies for different types of tasks is rather new, although some of the agencies have enjoyed enhanced authority for some time, mainly in financial and personnel matters, but also in some substantive areas (Læg Reid et al. 2003).

Over the past 15 years, a process of structural devolution has been going on in Norwegian central government, and the independent agency model has become more differentiated (Christensen and Læg Reid 2004a). This development was partly inspired by New Public Management ideas and solutions, but was also a part of Norway's adaptation to the EU and the internal market. The model combines vertical inter-organizational specialization, whereby agencies formally gain more authority, with increased horizontal inter-organizational specialization, whereby the distribution of roles and tasks among agencies is more differentiated and non-overlapping.

Another main feature of Norwegian-style NPM has been the pragmatic introduction of a formalized performance-assessment regime – labelled «management by objectives and results» (MBOR) (Læg Reid, Roness and Rubecksen 2006a). A main tool for

regulating relations between ministries and agencies is the performance-management system. One part of this system is the establishment of a quasi-contractual steering model, whereby the parent ministry allocates resources and specifies targets and goals for the various agencies by means of an annual steering document. The agencies, in turn, are expected to report on performance through formal reports and a formalised steering dialogue. The idea is to make the managers manage by the use of steering and reporting documents, formal steering procedures and dialogues, performance-management techniques and agency steering meetings. The MBOR concept was put into practice through three reform measures from 1990 onwards: activity planning, budget reforms, and pay reforms, all of which are now integrated parts of the governmental financial regulatory system.

Summing up, recent Norwegian administrative reform is characterized by a reluctant approach to NPM that has focused more on the managerial component of NPM than on the marketization component. The reform movement has, however, gathered pace over the last decade (Christensen and Lægreid 2004b).

Database and methodology

In the formal structural arrangements of the Norwegian state apparatus the *form of affiliation* is a crucial feature for determining whether an organization is part of the civil service or not. At the national level the civil service is divided into quite small ministries with directorates/central agencies, other ordinary public administration bodies, agencies with extended authority and government administrative enterprises, all outside the ministries but reporting to a ministry. Civil service organizations at the regional or local level may report either directly to a ministry or through an organization at the national level. All civil service organizations are, legally speaking, government entities subject to ministerial directions and subordinated to ministerial control. In contrast to state-owned companies, civil service organizations are regulated through the state budget, the state collective wage agreement, the state pension scheme, the Freedom of Information Act and the Public administration Law. Some agencies and all government administrative enterprises are given enhanced budgetary leeway (Lægreid et al. 2003). In short, the form of affiliation grants different sets of formal constraints or freedom of action within a more general regulative framework.

In Norway, agencies outside the ministries represent the largest share of the civil service. In 2003, only a small number of civil servants were employed by ministries (about 3,900). In comparison, about 120,000 civil servants (including those at the regional and local levels) were employed by directorates/central agencies, other ordinary public administration bodies, agencies with extended authority, and government administrative enterprises. This number decreased from 185,000 in 1990, mainly due to the transformation of some large agencies and administrative enterprises into state-owned companies outside the civil service (e.g. Norwegian State Railways, the

Norwegian Power Company, Telenor, the Norwegian Post and the airport administration).

The civil service organizations are divided into *sub-forms of affiliation*. As of 2004 there were 57 directorates/central agencies, 125 other public administration bodies, 28 agencies with extended authority, and 5 government administrative enterprises. All in all, the population adds up to 215 civil service organizations. One questionnaire was sent to each agency, and a central manager was asked to answer on behalf of the whole organization. The questionnaire was an adaptation of a similar survey carried out in Belgium (Flanders) in 2002–2003 (Verhoest, Verschuere and Bouckaert 2003).¹ It was rather comprehensive, covering organizational characteristics, autonomy dimensions, regulation and control relationships and organizational culture (Lægreid et al. 2004). A total of 150 organizations answered the survey, which constitutes a response rate of 70%. There are only small variations in the response rate according to sub-form of affiliation and between different ministerial areas. For half of the ministerial areas the response rate was over 80 % and none was below 50 %. Thus, our conclusion is that the respondents are quite representative for the population of Norwegian state agencies.

The dependent variables we will examine in this paper are the use of different management techniques, as perceived by the civil service organizations. The respondents were questioned about 18 different tools. The question we asked was: «Are the following techniques or instruments used in the organization?» The organizations could reply «yes» or «no» for each of the tools.²

To describe the scope, intensity and interconnection between different dependent variables we will primarily use univariate frequencies and factor analysis. To explain the variation in reported tools we will use bivariate correlations (summed up by measures like Pearson's r) and multivariate analyses, including independent variables having significant bivariate correlations.

Theoretical approaches

There is no generally accepted framework for characterizing the tools or instruments of internal regulation (Hood et al. 1999). Tools for regulation inside government vary widely in their explicitness – i.e., how precise or ambiguous they are; in their reflexivity – to what extent they are imposed from the top or are voluntary self-regulating mechanisms; and in their stability. By reflexivity we mean oversight practice, which builds on organizational self-regulation.

One issue for discussion has been whether New Public Management reforms have enhanced a more rule-based, process-driven style of executive government or whether, on the contrary, they represent a move away from such an approach to public administration (Hood et al. 1999, 2004). The repertoire of techniques is continually

¹ The questionnaire is part of the «Comparative Public Organization Data Base for Research and Analysis – Network» (COBRA). More information on the COBRA network is available on the Internet: <http://www.publicmanagement-cobra.org/>

² 13 organizations did not respond on any of the 18 tools and were excluded from the analysis. Some of the others did not respond with regard to specific tools. In these instances, we have included the missing data in the category «no».

expanding, both internally within each public sector organization and among external regulatory bodies. New process rules seem to be added without any substantial reduction in the old ones. In spite of all the talk of deregulation there is still a lot of oversight going on (Hood et al. 2004). New hybrid forms and mechanisms seem to have developed, and there is substantial variety in control over government. The application of organizational standards has increased significantly over the past 25 years and executives have many different tools to choose from (Christensen et al. 2004). Different waves or tides of reform have also highlighted different aspects or tools at different times (Light 1997, Talbot 2005). Reform tools tend to follow a cyclical pattern, coming into and going out of fashion (Røvik 1996).

The emergence of new techniques and the intensity of their application are driven by both demand and supply (Power 2005). The increase in the range of management tools, such as performance management, auditing and quality-measuring instruments, might be seen as a response to political demands for greater accountability of public service providers, as a product of increased concern with the efficiency and quality of public-sector services, and as a sign of political determination to meet fiscal constraints.

The increased use of management tools may also be triggered by supply side factors. Public and private professionals, groups of experts and international organizations and consultants have all been promoters and carriers of best management practices (Saint-Martin 2000, Sahlin-Andersson and Engwall 2002). Management consulting firms have been labelled as «fashion-setting organizations» whose mission is to create and disseminate new management ideas and models (Abrahamson 1996, Saint Martin 2005), while international organizations, such as the OECD, have been main carriers and promoters of different management tools (Sahlin-Andersson 2001, Marcussen 2004).

One variety of neo-institutional theory emphasizes that organizations exist in institutional environments and prescribes socially defined norms for their structural and procedural arrangements (Meyer and Rowan 1977, DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Organizations are exposed to and constrained by institutionalized standards that are widely accepted prescriptions for how parts of an organization should be organized (Røvik 1996). Some authors have referred to this as the «audit explosion» (Power 1997), but the scope of management tools is actually much broader, amounting to a «performance indicator industry», a «quality industry» and a general «management tool industry». Some of these standards are specific techniques, such as Management by Objectives, Total Quality Management, Balanced Scorecard, Business Process Reengineering and Development Dialogue. Others are general sets of doctrines such as New Public Management.

Techniques are frequently introduced and spread across organizations, policy areas and countries (Sahlin-Andersson and Engwall 2002). They are no longer confined to private firms but have moved into public-sector organizations, which since the mid-1980s have been considerably more exposed to private-sector management tools. In fact, some of these ideas have become so popular that they can be found nearly everywhere and in all kinds of organizations. Røvik (2002) labels such ideas organizational super-standards, of which Management by Objectives and Total Quality Management are two of the most popular in our time. Quality management reforms involve a shift in focus away from procedures and input and towards products,

performance, quality of output, customer satisfaction and empowerment of employees (Ingraham 1995, Peters and Pierre 2001). This neo-institutional approach argues that the main reason for the popularity of such tools is persuasive rhetoric and «taken-for-grantedness» (Nørreklit 2003), rather than a convincing theoretical foundation or documented success.

Thus there exists a series of organizational improvement initiatives representing different frameworks for performance. Some of them are rather holistic or generic, such as the benchmarking movement, the quality movement or the balance scorecard movement, while others are more sector- or organization-specific (Talbot 2005). There are different, interconnected families of management tools, such as auditing tools, accounting tools, and quality-assurance tools (Power 2005). There are *management tools*, such as team-based management, transformative management, service management, total quality management, knowledge management and value-based management; *tools for human resource management*, such as development dialogue, career planning, empowerment, downsizing and headhunting (Kernaghan 2001); *tools on organizational culture*, such as service culture, customer culture and learning culture; *tools on how to organize the work process*, such as value process management, business process reengineering, best practice and benchmarking; and *tools on steering and control* such as management by objectives, balanced scorecard, activity-based costing, activity-based management, economic value added and contract steering (Christensen et al. 2004). There has been an expansion of tools and standards both in scope and in scale. The range of activities has broadened, and so have the intensity of application and the resources expended. Organizational size and capacity have become significant factors in the success of the new standards and tools (Sahlin-Andersson and Engwall 2002).

One strong neo-institutional tradition focuses more on the similarities between organizations than on the differences. The idea of isomorphism implies that over time an organizational field will become formally more homogeneous. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) distinguish between three mechanisms of isomorphic institutional change: a) coercive isomorphism, meaning that organizations are forced via laws or directives issued by higher authorities to apply the same instruments; b) mimetic isomorphism, meaning that organizations copy other organizations to reduce uncertainty; and c) normative isomorphism, which emerges from pressure to establish common professional norms and identities. While coercive isomorphism may be categorized as hard regulation, since it is mandatory for public sector organizations, mimetic and normative isomorphism fall more under the headings of soft regulation, self-management and voluntary standards (Ahrne and Brunsson 2004, Möth 2004).

Soft regulation can exist both outside and inside organizations. In the first instance rule setting takes place outside the organization and the rules are often formulated formally as voluntary standards. In the second instance, soft regulation is internally formulated. It tends to be advisory, abstract and rather vague, allowing rule followers some discretion. There might also be a blurring of the boundaries between self-regulation and enforced regulation, represented by the concept of «enforced self-regulation», meaning that regulatory and management systems prescribe frameworks for internal control and self-management in organizations (Ayres and Braithwaite 1992).

We will look at the different tools or instruments, such as balanced scorecard, management by objectives and total quality management, as institutionalized standards (Røvik 1996). Organizations are typically multi-standard organizations that embrace many institutionalized standards, some of which may be enforced from above, and others adopted locally to reduce uncertainty or else triggered by professionals.

Standards may cover what organizations want, what they say and how they act. Many of the standards are about «how to act», and focus on how various processes, such as planning and control, should be designed, how leadership and management should be exercised, and how quality should be achieved (Brunsson and Jacobsson 2000). Our focus in this paper is on such standards, and we look at them as part of a wider discussion of regulation as well as part of a broader package of modern management tools.

We deal in particular with the followers of standards, represented by state organizations. We ask what standards are used and who follows the different standards. Standards often reflect ideals or popular ideas and not necessary actual practice (Brunsson and Jacobsson 2000). Following a standard might either imply changing the practice to fit the standard or changing the presentation of practice to fit the standard, but also changing the standard to fit the practice. It is not only a question of how a standard affects an organization, but also of how an organization affects the standard. The different tools are often semi-manufactured products that have to be refined locally (Røvik 1998).

One precondition for the spreading of organizational standards into public bodies is that these bodies have a common identity as formal organizations. Many of the recent public-sector reforms represented by the concept of «single-purpose organizations» and structural devolution have given public bodies more specific organizational characteristics (Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson 2000). The boundaries of public-sector organizations are becoming clearer, they have greater autonomy, and they are becoming more similar by adopting the same standards and management tools. They are expected to follow centrally defined procedural rules, such as management-by-objective-and-results, but they also have a hierarchy of their own, enhancing managerial discretion and freedom locally. Public-sector organizations are seen as efficient rational systems with their own specific objectives, instruments, resources and results. Public-sector organizations are changing from being sub-units in the larger system of public administration and instruments to be used by higher political-administrative levels in the state to becoming more autonomous formal organizations (Christensen and Lægred 2006).

The shift in the status of agencies and other public bodies towards that of regular formal organizations makes them more susceptible to influence from organizational experts and consultants, to the introduction of management tools formerly used mainly in private-sector organizations, and to the widespread application of generic standards in formal organizations everywhere. A central common feature of such standards is that they follow a model of formal organization designed to enhance distinctiveness, boundaries, hierarchy and rationality (Brunsson 2006)

It is also important to note that such standards need not only be adopted by central executives who spread them downwards in the hierarchy, but can also be initiated locally

and later imposed from the top. One such example is the Service Charter, which became mandatory for Norwegian state organizations from 2001 onwards (Stene 2001). Public-sector reforms focusing on structural devolution and single-purpose organizations strengthen the identity and autonomy of individual public bodies, producing a more fragmented and poly-centric network of separate organizations (Christensen and Læg Reid 2001, Sahlin-Andersson 2001, Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson 2000).

The individual organizations are, however, not only passive adopters of external standards. Their leaders can choose between standards and also transform the instruments and reshape them to fit their own organization (Sahlin-Andersson 1996, Friedland and Alford 1991). The tools are not merely «technical fixes» or a diffusion of standardized solutions – for normally the transfer of such management techniques also involves local adaptation, modification and interpretation (Pollitt 2004). Thus we can expect a lot of variation in the content of specific management techniques even if organizations use the same label for them.

The importance of organizational features

We will apply three sets of organizational features to analyze the popularity and variation of management tools, partly as an expression of regulation inside government and partly as choices for a shopping basket. What is needed to understand the variation in the adoption of the different tools is not a narrow technical approach, but a broad approach allowing for both formal and informal factors and internal and external features (cf. Power 2005). Taking a broad neo-institutional perspective as the point of departure, we start by discussing the importance of informal external features. At the same time, we need to be sensitive to the variety of internal organizational features that may influence managerial practice. We therefore also discuss the significance of formal structural features as well as informal cultural features. Some features may be particularly relevant for analyzing the adoption of management tools as an expression of regulation inside government, while others are more relevant when regarding the tools as part of a shopping basket. Regarding management tools as external regulation of organization, we formulate some general hypotheses about variations in the number of tools used by state organizations. Regarding the tools as part of a shopping basket we also formulate some general hypotheses about variations in the number of tools, as well as specific hypotheses about variations in the types of tools used.

External features

A first set of factors describes the autonomy and control of agencies primarily as a response to external pressure (cf. Olsen 1992). The importance of the environment for the use of management tools may be of two kinds (cf. Christensen and Læg Reid 2001). In the first instance, tools may be adopted as a response to internationally based norms and beliefs about how an agency should be run and steered, simply because these have become the prevailing doctrine in the institutional environment. As indicated above, one variety of neo-institutional theory regards management tools as symbols and rationalized myths producing legitimacy (Meyer and Rowan 1977). The more a tool is informed by

highly-valued ideas such as modernization, renewal, efficiency and progress, the better it travels and the more popular and widely accepted it will become.

The legitimacy of New Public Management, with its strong focus on privatization, agency autonomy, performance management and customer service, has come to be taken for granted and NPM has thus become ideologically dominant. Thus, via a process of *isomorphism*, there will be pressure for all state agencies to adopt similar tools. Such isomorphism can be coercive, mimetic or normative. Accordingly, generally we will expect for the shopping basket that:

H1: A high number of management tools will be adopted and there will be low variation between state agencies.

What will be reported, however, is not necessarily practice, but interpretations of practice (Sahlin-Andersson 1996). In addition, the more an organization is exposed to *external criticism*, the more it will need to choose modern management tools from the shopping basket to reduce this criticism and enhance its legitimacy. Thus, in general we will expect:

H2: Agencies exposed to external criticism will adopt management tools to a larger extent than agencies not exposed to this kind of criticism.

In the second instance, tools may be chosen for the shopping basket to solve widespread problems created by the technical environment, such as performance and *economic competition and market pressure* in a global economy. Thus, some tools might strengthen their ability to handle the technical environment, and will therefore be included in their shopping basket:

H3: Agencies working in a market or quasi-market situation will adopt management tools like customer surveys to a larger extent than agencies that have no competitors.

In order to enhance free, fair, and equal competition in the market and thus promote economy and efficiency it is especially important for agencies operating in the market to prevent political executives interfering in their daily business. Pollitt et al. (2004) have revealed that the way agencies are steered depends on whether they are embedded in a market or not. Agencies operating in a market need commercial independence and discretion in order to match their competitors, while steering and interference by parent ministries in their daily business tend to undermine their position vis-à-vis other market actors. Thus, regarding management tools as external regulation of organizations our general hypothesis will be:

H4: Agencies working in a market or a quasi-market situation will adopt management tools to a lesser extent than agencies that have no competitors.

Structural features

The second set involves variables formal structural features that may be designed or exploited by the executives to make their organizations more efficient. As indicated by the concept of bounded rationality (March and Simon 1958), decision-makers face problems of capacity and understanding and have to make some selections. The formal organizational structure represents one important selection mechanism. Formal structure and procedures organize some actors, cleavages, problems, and solutions into decision-making processes in the public sector, while others are excluded.

Gulick (1937) argues that there is a rather close connection between the formal structure chosen and practice within and between organizations, underlining that the way formal authority is distributed among hierarchical levels is important for autonomy and control in practice. In a system characterized by independent agencies this distribution is biased against the political executive. The formal instruments of steering become diluted as the distance between administrative levels increases, and political signals are generally weaker in subordinate bodies than in ministries (Egeberg 2003). It makes a difference whether central government is an integrated system under ministerial responsibility or a disintegrated system of autonomous or semi-autonomous organizations (Christensen and Læg Reid 2006). Thus, regarding management tools as external regulation of organizations our general hypothesis on the importance of *form of affiliation* will be:

H5a: The structurally devolved organizations will adopt management tools to a lesser extent than ordinary civil service organizations.

On the other hand, however, structurally devolved organizations have fewer restrictions on the choice of management tools to make them more efficient. Thus, as indicated in the alternative general hypothesis, we will expect their shopping basket to be larger:

H5b: The structurally devolved organizations will adopt management tools to a greater extent than ordinary civil service organizations.

Another structural variable is the character of *primary tasks*. Studies of state agencies reveal that there are significant variations in their behaviour according to what their primary tasks are (Pollitt et al. 2004). The task structure is also relevant with regard to how autonomy is exercised in practice. Here, the basis for categorizing types of primary tasks is the organizations' own perception of what kind of tasks they have. We will distinguish between service-providing or producing tasks on the one hand, and regulatory tasks, policy-formulation or other ways of exercising public authority on the other. According to the administrative policy doctrines of today, political executives should not interfere in the activities of service-providing and producing agencies, because this could disturb free and fair market competition and the ability of the agencies to be responsive to the demands of customers and service quality. Thus,

regarding management tools as external regulation of organizations, our general hypothesis on the importance of primary tasks will be:

H6: Agencies with service-providing or producing tasks will adopt management tools to a lesser extent than other agencies.

However, some tools might strengthen their ability to handle the technical environment, and will therefore be included in their shopping basket:

H7: Agencies with service-providing or producing tasks will adopt more quality tools and customer surveys than other agencies.

Cultural features

A third set of factors concerns the historical and cultural traditions of political-administrative systems (Selznick 1957). The importance of the cultural environment and especially the organizational culture are emphasized by several scholars (e.g. Lynn et al. 2001, Fukuyama 2004, Pollitt et al. 2004). In institutional approaches informal norms, identities, and the logic of appropriateness are important (March and Olsen 1989). The point of departure is that a certain style of managing agencies has developed over time. Norms and values within agencies and central government and internal dynamics are important. Path dependencies constrain what is regarded as appropriate and possible to move to agency status and how the agencies will operate. The reform road taken reflects the main features of national institutional processes, where institutional «roots» determine the path forward (Krasner 1988). Change is characterized by historical inefficiency and incrementalism. What happens in one agency is not a blueprint for developments in other agencies. Administrative traditions represent «filters» producing different outcomes in different agencies.

Certain styles of regulating and controlling agencies have evolved over the years, whereby agencies are seen as strong and integrated instruments of political development serving particular political goals. For a long time this was a dominant feature of the Norwegian administrative model (Grønlie 1999). Over the past years, however, this model has been challenged, and the culture has changed towards giving agencies more leeway and autonomy and allowing for looser coupling to political goals, and it has gradually come to be taken for granted that agencies should be at arm's length from the political executive. The extent of this cultural change will probably vary between agencies. In some administrative cultures well-established informal contacts and networks between ministries and agencies may undermine their autonomy and create stronger integration between ministry and agency than expected from the formal model (Jacobsson 1984, Pierre 2004).

We will distinguish between three indicators of administrative culture. First, *agency age*. Normally, the development of a distinct culture and tradition takes some time. Older organizations will tend to have developed a stronger identity than younger ones, and the potential for socialization of their members into a common culture is higher. Older

organizations will therefore be more able to resist pressure from outside actors as well as management trends and fashions. Thus, whether regarding management tools as external regulation of organizations or as part of the institutional environment, in general we will expect:

H8: Old agencies (established before 1990) will adopt modern management tools to a lesser extent than young agencies (established 1990 or later).

Second, *agency size*. Agency size is normally seen as a structural feature, but in this paper we will also use it as an indicator of cultural homogeneity. Small agencies may generally have a more homogeneous culture and a more distinct identity than large agencies, and they are thus more able to modify signals coming from the ministry. At the same time, small agencies may have less administrative capability to exploit and utilize the possibilities offered by structural devolution and formal authority. Thus, whether size is taken as an indicator of culture or structure, and whether management tools are regarded as external regulation of organizations or as instruments for handling the technical environment, the general hypothesis will be:

H9: Small agencies will adopt modern management tools to a lesser extent than large agencies.

Third, we will expect internal *agency culture* to affect the adoption of modern management tools. Here, regarding management tools as external regulation of organizations, the general hypothesis will be:

H10: Agencies with a strong quality of service culture will use modern management tools to a lesser extent than other agencies.

However, as indicated above, some tools might be more in line with the existing agency culture than others, and will therefore be included in their shopping basket:

H11: Agencies with a strong quality of service culture will adopt tools like customer surveys to a larger extent than other agencies.

Before we examine whether these hypotheses hold or not we will discuss the two other types of questions concerning the range of tools and how they are related to each other.

The scope of management tools

Different types of management techniques can be discerned based on subdivisions already defined in the literature (e.g. Lawton and Rose 1994, Pollitt 1995, Ingraham et al. 2003, Flynn 2002), e.g. financial management techniques, performance management

techniques, quality management techniques and human resource management techniques. Some techniques represent managerialistic efforts, while others focus more on quality management (Ingraham 1995). It is, however, a confusing area to delve into, partly because of the different terminology used by different organizational «tribes». The concepts are rather ambiguous and complex, and the different movements are engaged in a kind of «religious war» (Øvretveit 2005).

We will thus stick to an *empirical* categorization of the different tools and use factor analysis to classify the set of tools or techniques used in Norwegian state organizations. Conceptually, the 18 items include both external and internal techniques.

There is significant variation in the extent to which the different tools are adopted by state organizations (Table 1). Some management techniques are mandatory and externally imposed on most state organizations, which might explain the high scores we find for performance reporting in annual reports, budget documents, and operational and strategic plans, but also for management-by-objectives-and-results, which is rooted in the governmental financial regulative framework (Læg Reid, Roness and Rubecksen 2006a). This type of reporting on organizational performance and results is clearly linked to conscious and active reform efforts undertaken by central government in recent decades, aimed at increasing relevant steering information in central governmental regulative systems and related documents, in particular the budget system. These tools, which are now found in almost all state organizations, can be labelled super-standards. The same can be said about development dialogue (Røvik 2002). All agencies in our sample use this management idea. Service charters, which were a main modernizing idea in the Bondevik I government (1997–2000), are also a widespread tool.³ The government's goal was that all state agencies should have a service declaration by the end of 2000. In 2004, 77% of the agencies in our sample reported that they used service declarations to some or a great extent. A common feature of these frequently used tools is that they are coercive and made mandatory for all agencies by the government.

In addition, the use of management techniques perhaps more often associated with private-sector organizations, such as customer surveys (69%), knowledge-based management (57%) and team-based management (53%), have become quite widespread among state agencies. These tools are more voluntary. Approximately one third of the organizations report that they use management techniques such as balanced scorecard, benchmarking,⁴ service-based management and contract steering.⁵ These are also

³ Development dialogue and service charters are not included in Table 1 since they were not part of this question battery, but were covered in other questions in the survey.

⁴ Benchmarking represents a package of various tools for systematic comparison of result achievement and production processes. The aim is to evaluate the organizations' efficiency and productivity by comparing the organization with other organizations. Comparison may include international comparisons (other countries) or other organizations operating within the same policy field or executing similar tasks, but comparison can also be made within the realm of the organization itself – i.e. between different sub-units. It is assumed that benchmarking as a technique will uncover best practice within a specific field, which then will represent the desired standard for organizations to achieve.

⁵ Contractualization is a feature primarily stemming from NPM ideology. In theory such contracts – or, in the case of state organizations without a legal identity separate from that of the state «quasi-contracts» – provide for greater clarity concerning objectives, performance criteria and available resources (Pollitt 1995).

management techniques more often associated with the private sector, but they seem to have gained some ground in the public sector.

Table 1. Management tools, techniques or instruments used in Norwegian state organizations 2004. Percentages. (N = 137)

	Yes	No
Performance reporting (annual reports, budget documents, operational plans, strategic plans)	99	1
Management-by-objective-and-results (MBOR)	85	15
Customer surveys	69	31
Knowledge-based management	57	43
Team-based management	53	47
Service-based management	36	64
Internal quality monitoring units	33	67
Benchmarking	31	69
Balanced scorecard	29	71
Contract steering	27	73
Quality management systems (ISO etc.)	26	74
Total quality management	23	77
Quality standards (CAF etc.)	18	82
Value-based management	14	86
Activity-based management (ABM)	3	97
Activity based costing (ABC)	1	99
Value process management	1	99
Economic value added (EVA)	0	100

Having internal quality-monitoring units is also relevant for more than 30% of the organizations, while fewer state organizations report using quality standards for production and service delivery like CAF⁶ (18%) or value-based management (14%).

⁶ Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a self-evaluation tool for public sector organizations, developed on a European basis from 1998 onwards, allowing for the sharing of best practices and benchmarking (Engel 2002, see also Thijs and Staes 2006).

Still, quality management systems such as ISO⁷ or total quality management⁸ are relevant for about one quarter of the organizations. On the other hand, almost all of the organizations report that management techniques such as value process management, activity-based costing, activity-based management and economic value added are not relevant at all and not in use in their organization.⁹

14 of the 18 listed tools are used by a significant number of the agencies, and 11 of them are used by one quarter or more of the agencies. The maximum number of tools used in one agency is 14, all agencies use at least one tool, and on average they use 6 of the listed tools. With regard to the total *number of tools* adopted we distinguish between low users of three tools or fewer (18%), average users of 4–9 tools (69%) and high users of 10 tools or more (13%).

A factor analysis¹⁰ of the 13 tools used by more than 13% of the agencies (but not by almost all agencies) reveals that they can be grouped into four clusters or families (Table 2).

⁷ ISO, the International Organization for Standards, mainly produces and formulates international standards for trade and industry, but in recent years it has also formulated standards relevant for and adopted by many governmental organizations in different countries around the world in areas such as quality management (ISO 9000) and environmental challenges (ISO 14 000). Today, these standards are among the ISO's most widely known standards.

⁸ Total quality management is a comprehensive strategy of organizational and attitude change enabling staff to learn and use quality methods in order to reduce costs and to respond to the requirements of patients and other customers (Øvretveit 2005).

⁹ The last three management tools are mainly financial performance techniques and involve cost-accounting tools and analysis. These techniques, in their original form, emphasize organizational efficiency, productivity and profit. Activity-based management (ABM) is closely linked to activity-based costing (ABC) and shared a common focus on the organization's activities. But while ABC is a narrower cost-accounting tool mainly involving productivity analysis, ABM also involves an extended focus on steering and strategy and represents a process-steering tool.

¹⁰ In each category we include variables with factor scores $\geq .50$ in the indexes.

¹¹ The index is constructed by counting occurrences of agencies reporting that they use the four tools included in category 1 in the factor analysis. There are relatively strong significant intercorrelations between the tools in this category, ranging from .20 to .60.

Table 2. Factor analysis. Different management tools. Rotated Component Matrix(a). (N=137)

	Component			
	Managerial tools	Quality tools	Performance steering	Balanced Scorecard
Quality standards	-.013	.555	-.007	.003
Customers surveys	.306	.351	.251	-.544
Quality management systems	.019	.657	.249	.196
Internal quality monitoring units	-.002	.336	.592	-.131
MBOR	-.037	-.077	.725	.322
Balanced Scorecard	-.176	.157	.097	.786
Contract steering	.182	.215	.694	-.151
Benchmarking	.067	.777	.166	-.044
Value-based management	.387	.318	-.034	.390
Total quality management	.584	-.098	.245	-.018
Team-based management	.661	.086	-.046	.035
Knowledge based management	.823	.177	-.100	-.067
Service-based management	.752	.131	.135	.177

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a: Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

The first category consists of knowledge-based management, team-based management, service-based management and total quality management. We label this category *managerial tools*. For the rest of the analysis we use an additive index for the use of managerial tools, ranging from 0 to 4.¹¹ 29 % of the agencies report that they do not use any of the four listed tools, 16% say they use one, 23% two, 20% three and 12% use all four tools.

The second category consists of quality management systems, quality standards and benchmarking. We label this category *quality tools*, representing the «quality movement» in public administration (Øvretveit 2005). For the rest of the analysis we also use an additive index for the use of quality tools, ranging from 0 to 3.¹² 51% of the agencies report that they do not use any of the three listed quality tools, 28% use one, 14% two, and 7% use all three tools. Overall, the quality management tools are less widespread than the more general management tools included in category 1.

¹² The index is constructed by counting occurrences of agencies reporting that they use the three tools included in category 2 in the factor analysis. The intercorrelations between these tools range from .15 to .38.

The third category consists of internal quality monitoring units, management-by-objectives-and-results and contract steering. Performance management systems specifying targets, performance indicators and performance reporting are central components in this family of tools, and we label this category *performance steering tools*. For the rest of this analysis we also use an additive index for these tools, ranging from 0 to 3.¹³ 13% of the agencies report that they do not use any of the three listed performance steering tools, 45% use one, 26% two and 16% use all three tools. It is rather surprising that 13% of the agencies do not use any of these tools, since one of them (MBOR) is mandatory.

The fourth category in the factor analysis contains only one variable, *balanced scorecard*, and 29% of the agencies report that they apply this tool. This technique does not fit directly either into the quality tools family or into the performance-steering tools family, but is a sort of hybrid. Balanced scorecard is one of the latest innovations in management, launched by Kaplan and Norton (1996) as a tool of strategic control, and it has become a popular tool in both private and public organizations.

We also include *customer surveys* as a separate variable. This tool does not fit into any of the four clusters, but cuts across all of them. Customer surveys are supposed to improve quality, increase performance steering and support both general management tools and also balanced scorecard. 69% of the agencies report that they use this tool.¹⁴

These five different families of management tools are more complementary than alternative or competing standards. There are no significant negative correlations between them. The quality tools index has a significant positive correlation with customer surveys (.27) and with the performance-steering tools index (.40). The managerial tools index has a significant positive correlation with balanced scorecard (.20) and customer surveys (.23), and there is also a significant positive correlation between the performance-steering tools index and customer surveys (.26). The main picture is that if agencies use one type of standard or tools they also tend to use others.

In this section we have accounted for variation in the scope and intensity with which different tools are used and also revealed different families of tools with overlapping relations. In the next section we will examine the variation between agencies in the total number of tools used as well as in the use of different types of tools.

Bivariate and multivariate analyses

This section focuses on how the scores on the different independent variables, i.e. our indicators of structural, cultural and environmental features, correlate with the adoption of modern management tools. We first examine the bivariate relations between each set of independent and dependent variables, and then do a multivariate analysis of the relative importance of the various independent variables for the total number of tools,

¹³ The index is constructed by counting occurrences of agencies reporting that they use the three tools included in category 3. The intercorrelations between these tools range from .17 to .34.

¹⁴ Value-based management does not fit into any of the categories either. Since only a few agencies report that they use this tool, we exclude it from the rest of the analysis.

managerial tools, quality tools, performance-steering tools, customer surveys and balanced scorecard.

Environmental features. Market competition tends to affect the number of tools used to some extent, but in the opposite direction to that expected from our general hypothesis (H4), based on regarding management tools as external regulation of organizations? However, our specific hypothesis (H3) that tools like customer surveys would be more widespread among agencies operating with some kind of competition than in other agencies gets some support. With regard to the importance of external criticism agencies exposed to criticism tend to use some types of tools (quality tools and performance-steering tools) to a larger extent than agencies not exposed to criticism, in accordance with our general hypothesis (H2) on the size of the shopping basket.

Table 3 Bivariate correlations between independent and dependent variables. Pearson's R. (N=137)

	Managerial tools	Quality tools	Performance steering tools	Balanced Scorecard	Customer Surveys	Number of tools
<i>Environmental features:</i>						
Market competition	.12	.18*	.06	-.09	.22*	.16
Criticism	.09	-.17*	-.21*	-.03	.07	-.07
<i>Cultural features:</i>						
Agency age	.02	.04	.04	.02	.01	.06
Agency size	.01	.46**	.29**	.10	.39**	.36**
Quality of service culture	-.11	-.11	-.18*	.02	-.08	-.18*
<i>Structural features:</i>						
Form of affiliation	.15	.13	.32**	-.04	.32**	.26**
Primary tasks	.18*	.06	.05	-.07	.13	.14

** Significant at the .01 level; * Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Market competition: 0) no, 1) yes; Criticism: 0) to some or very large extent, 1) to a small or no extent; Form of affiliation: 0) ordinary agencies, 1) other agencies; Primary tasks: 0) other tasks, 1) service provision or production tasks; Agency age: 0) established before 1990, 1) established 1990 or later; Agency size: 1) small (≤ 50 employees), 2) medium-sized (50–199 employees), 3) large (≥ 200 employees); Quality of services culture: 0) average or less, 1) very good or good.

Structural features

Table 3 reveals that form of affiliation makes a difference with regard to the use of management tools. Agencies with some form and degree of formal autonomy report that they use a larger number of tools than ordinary agencies. This does not lend much support to our general hypothesis (H5a) based on regarding management tools as

external regulation of organizations, but are more in line with the alternative general hypothesis (H5b) that the structurally devolved agencies will adopt management tools to a greater extent than agencies that are structurally closer to the ministry. In particular, the structurally devolved agencies use performance-steering tools and customer surveys to a greater extent than other agencies.

Table 3 also reveals that the type of primary tasks only makes a difference for the use of the family of managerial techniques. Thus, neither our general hypothesis (H6) that agencies with service-providing or producing tasks will use fewer management tools than other agencies, nor our more specific hypothesis (H7) that they will use more quality tools and customer surveys than other agencies is confirmed.

Cultural features

The most important cultural feature seems to be agency size. There is a strong positive correlation between size and the use of management tools in general, and in particular for quality tools, performance-steering tools and customer surveys. Large agencies use such tools to a greater extent than small agencies. This accord with our general hypothesis (H9), which predicted that large agencies, being less homogenous and having more capacity, would use management tools to a greater extent than small agencies.

There is also an effect of quality of service culture. Agencies that assess the quality of their own services as very good or good tend to use fewer management tools, especially fewer performance-steering tools, than other agencies. We thus find some support for our general hypothesis (H10) based on regarding management tools as external regulation of organizations? However, the more specific hypothesis (H11) that tools like customer surveys will be more widespread among agencies with a strong quality of service culture than in other agencies does not get any support. There is no effect of *agency age* on the use of modern management tools. Thus, our general hypothesis on the importance of age (H8) does not get any support.

One interesting finding from the bivariate analyses is that the only dependent variable having no significant correlations is the balanced scorecard. One interpretation of this finding is that this tool might be emerging as a new super-standard. This also accords with our hypothesis (H1) on low variation between state agencies. However, for the other types of tools there are several significant correlations, in contrast to the general isomorphism hypothesis. The number of tools used may also be regarded as quite high, in accordance with this hypothesis.

Multivariate analysis

We now turn to the question of the relative explanatory power of the different independent variables for the different management tools. The multivariate analyses, summed up in Table 4, generally confirm the main pattern revealed in the bivariate analyses.¹⁵

First, the independent variables explain a substantial part of the variation in the use of management tools in general, and especially in the use of quality tools, performance steering tools and customer surveys. Second, the most important explanatory variable is

¹⁵ Only variables with significant bivariate correlations are included in the analysis.

agency size. This is especially the case for the use of quality tools and customer surveys, but also for the total number of tools used.

Table 4. Summary of regression equations by structural, cultural and environmental features affecting the use of management tools. Standardized Beta coefficients. Linear regressions. (N =137)

	Managerial tools	Quality tools	Performance steering tools	Customer Surveys	Number of tools
<i>Environmental features:</i>					
Market competition	-	.11	-	.02	-
Criticism	-	-.12	-.19*	-	-
<i>Cultural features:</i>					
Agency size	-	.42**	.17*	.32**	.30**
Quality of service culture	-	-	-.07	-	-.10
<i>Structural features:</i>					
Form of affiliation	-	-	.25**	.20**	.14
Primary tasks	.18*	-	-	-	-
Multiple R	.18a	.48a	.43a	.44a	.41a
R2	.03	.23	.18	.19	.16
Adjusted R2	.02	.21	.16	.17	.15
F Statistics	4.350	13.337	7.400	10.447	8.736
Significance of F	.039a	.000a	.000a	.000a	.000a

** : Significant at the .01 level; * : Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Third, form of affiliation also makes a difference for the use of performance-steering tools and customer surveys, and primary tasks have a significant effect on the use of what we have called KTS management tools. Fourth, the importance of environmental factors is reduced when controlling for other variables, indicating that the support we found in the bivariate analysis does not hold when other factors are considered. There is, though, still a significant effect of public criticism on the use of performance-steering tools.

Discussion and conclusion

In this paper we have first shown that the use of modern management tools is widespread within government agencies in Norway. On average, the agencies report that they use six different tools. Some of them are very popular and have become super-standards adopted almost everywhere. They have become part of the script about how to organize modern public agencies. Regarding the tools as expressions of regulation inside government, we find that, in spite of a trend towards autonomization, agencification, deregulation and increased flexibility in administrative and regulatory reforms, there are a large number of different tools used in the various agencies. A super-standard may be coercive, such as MBOR, which has been made mandatory by higher authorities, but it may also be more voluntary, such as customer surveys. Thus, we face a combination of formal «hard laws» and regulations imposed and enforced in a top-down process, and informal «soft» rules introduced as standards and guidelines more from the bottom up (Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson 2006). Deregulation and reregulation thus operate in tandem (Christensen and Læg Reid 2006). Not all tools have moved into public-sector organizations to the same degree, however. There is obviously a selection process going on. To explore the importance of ideas on selection and isomorphism more fully we would need longitudinal data, and not cross-sectional data like that provided by this survey.

Second, we have revealed different families of management tools, such as quality tools, performance-steering tools and managerial tools. The NPM movement does not represent a decisive move away from rule-based and process-driven approaches to administration. There might now be more rule- and process-driven styles of government than ever before (Hood et al. 1999, 2004).

Third, the different tools and families of tools are more complementary than alternative standards. New tools and techniques supplement or complement old ones, rather than replacing them. New process rules are added without a substantial reduction in the old ones. We do not see a general trend towards deregulated and entrepreneurial government, as suggested in the contemporary reform movement, but an emergence of reshaped and partly new oversight systems often emerging in hybrid forms.

Fourth, there is also significant variation in the use of different types of tools, but less so for balanced scorecard and managerial tools than for other tools. Balanced scorecard and the family managerial tools appear to be adopted to the same extent in all kinds of agencies. Thus, they seem to be decontextualized tools to a great extent.

Use of the other tools depends to a larger extent on contextual features. The most important factor here is agency size. Generally, large agencies adopt more of the modern management tools and reinvention reforms than small agencies (cf. Brudney et al. 1999, Moynihan and Ingraham 2004). Especially performance steering tools, quality tools and customer surveys, are more common in large organizations than in small. This is probably due to the fact that large organizations generally have more resources, competence and capability, but also that they are more culturally heterogeneous. Modern management tools provide control mechanisms that are more needed in large organizations than in small. The combination of more capacity and greater demand enhances the use of modern management tools in agencies.

Fifth, there is also some effect of structural features, such as form of affiliation and primary tasks, and also of external criticism. When an agency is heavily criticized from outside there is a greater tendency to use performance steering tools, a finding that is also revealed in case studies in the Norwegian central government (Ramslien 2005). This is what might be expected from a neo-institutional perspective as a strategy to enhance legitimacy.

Sixth, the management tools can be seen both as regulation inside government and as a shopping basket. Some tools such as MBOR and performance reporting are cohesive regulatory tools imposed from external public bodies and are generally adopted in state organizations. Others are more popular techniques picked for the shopping basket of management tools and adopted in a majority of state organizations, such as customer service, knowledge based management and team-based management. A third category is tools that often remain on the shelves and are only adopted by very few state organizations, such as activity based management, activity based costing, value process management and economic value added.

We find that hypotheses based on regarding the tools as part of a shopping basket are supported to a somewhat larger extent than hypotheses based on regarding them as an expression of regulation inside government. More specific hypotheses for the use of certain tools, based on the importance of technical and institutional environments, only get a limited support. The main impression, then, is that there is no one-factor explanation for the variation in the use of management tools by Norwegian state organizations. Cultural features, such as size, make a significant difference, but structural and environmental features also have some explanatory power. In addition, size can also be seen as a proxy for cultural features such as cultural homogeneity but also for structural features such as capacity and capability.

What, then, are the practical and theoretical implications of these findings? Regarding the management tools as potential regulatory tools, we find that after a decade of administrative and regulatory reforms aimed at increasing the autonomy of agencies in general, the agencies still report that they use a lot of regulatory tools. Thus, there is much regulation inside government in which government officials oversee the work of other bureaucrats using rules formulated within the government on how public bodies should operate (Læg Reid, Rønnes and Rubecksen 2005, 2006b). While agencies may have more autonomy from the ministries, they also face an expansion in oversight both from traditional *ex ante* authorization and from newer *ex post* audit and assessment measures (Hood et al. 1999, Christensen and Læg Reid 1998). In addition, they also apply a variety of management tools and quality assessment techniques. We have also revealed that oversight is supplemented by tools in which mutuality and cultural factors are main components. The old forms of regulation and control do not fade away in the new regulatory state; rather, they are supplemented by new instruments of control, resulting in a more complex regulatory regime.

In this paper we have partly focused on regulation as an internal means of control of formal organizations. The increase in the autonomy of formal organizations in the public sector has produced a greater need for more formal control (Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson 2000). Deregulation has produced a large number of autonomous formal organizations, and this in turn increases the need for regulation. Thus,

agencification and regulation go in tandem (Christensen and Læg Reid 2006). Autonomous organizations need regulation and regulation needs autonomous organizations. But it is not only a question of demand. The tools and techniques also spread irrespective of their problem-solving capability. There is a tendency to follow fads, fashions and dominant ideas, so that copying and diffusion are main mechanisms (Christensen and Læg Reid 2006, Levi-Faur 2002). The choice for managerial and political executives seems to be more about when and under what conditions modern management tools should be included in the shopping basket rather than whether they should be there at all.

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