

The neo-Weberian state: From ideal type model to reality?

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The neo-Weberian state: From ideal type model to reality?

Geert Bouckaert*

Abstract

Public sector reforms have been a feature of past decades. Many of these reforms reacted against hierarchy and bureaucracy to shift to markets and networks. Nevertheless, next to New Public Management (NPM) and New Public Governance (NPG), the neo-Weberian state (NWS) also remained a crucial ideal type, certainly for the Western European practice which is embedded in Weberian public administration (PA). A theoretical and empirical question is whether NWS is sustainable and resilient in re-inventing and re-appraising 'bureaucracy' in the 21st century. This contribution claims that initially there was an empirical observation, certainly in continental Europe, of neo-Weberian public administration derived from the dynamics of public sector reforms in the second half of the 20th century. It was then 'upgraded' as an NWS ideal type model for theoretical reasons. NWS is a hierarchy-driven system within a hierarchy-market-network space. This NWS (based and driven by hierarchy) then moved to one of the normative reform models.

In this contribution it is also claimed and assumed that NWS, contrary to NPM (market-driven) and NPG (network-driven), will ensure the three core functions of a 'whole of government' strategy within a 'whole of society' context: inclusive and equitable service delivery, resilient crises governance, and effective innovation for government and society.

Keywords: Weber, neo-Weber, bureaucracy, reform

JEL codes: B32

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1. From Weber's PA to Weberian PA to PA reforms

In the beginning of the 20th century, scientific management was a key paradigm focusing on the productivity of organisations.

In 1911, in the US, Frederick Taylor (1856–1915), an engineer, published *The Principles of Scientific Management*, which resulted in 'Taylorism' as an expression of rational organisations. In 1916, in France, Henry Fayol (1841–1925), also an engineer, published *Administration Industrielle et Générale*. In 1923, at the Second International Administrative Science Conference in Brussels (which in 1930 resulted in the establishment of the Brussels-based International Institute of Administrative Sciences), Fayol presented a paper in which he applied his principles to 'public administration'. The American Lyndall Urwick (1891–1983), who worked at the International Management Institute in Geneva, translated Fayol's work in 1929 (*Industrial and General Administration*) (Sager et al 2018). Luther Gulick (1892–1993), from the Institute of Public Administration at Columbia University in New York, recognised these European contributions to management science, but also focused on better management by improving and training 'the top' of an organisation. In a combined effort, in 1937 Gulick and Urwick published their *Papers on the Science of Administration*, resulting in the still famous POSDCORB (planning, organising, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, budgeting) acronym.

Even though his disciplinary background and historical context were very different, Max Weber (1864–1920) studied bureaucracy and contributed to, and was part of, this productivity *Zeitgeist* (Drechsler 2020). His efforts to understand and explain the shift from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* by referring to types of authority and the importance of legal authority resulted in his reflections on bureaucracy as the most rational of organisations (Weber 1904, 1922, 1947). His reflections emphasised an instrumental vision of bureaucracies. Even though Weber was not an engineer, his sociological/economical and rational/instrumental vision was in line with the scientific management approach of that time (Bruun and Whimster 2014; Whimster 2007; Whimster and Lash 1987).

Ultimately, Weber's vision of bureaucracy and public administration evolved into a 'Weberian PA' (ideal type, normative model and reality), which then evolved in an almost dialectic way into post-bureaucracy reforms.¹

In trying to surface the essence of public sector reforms since the end of the 1970s, reform trends shifted as a result of corrective actions and ideological shifts. The initial editions of *Public Management Reform* (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2000, 2004) covered roughly 20 to 25 years of the reform timespan (from the end of the 1970s until the beginning of the 2000s). Our concluding reflections resulted in four reform ideal types, expressed as the 4Ms: maintain, modernise, marketise and minimise.

According to Weber, ideal types are a methodological tool to interpret reality. In his 1904 essay on 'Objectivity' ('*Objektivität*') he discussed this pure type of thinking in applying it to abstract economic theory, which allowed him to offer an ideal portrait of rational action-based processes in

¹ For an excellent overview of seven paradigms: see Torfing et al (2021).

a so-called free market economy. Obviously, the construction of ideal types is inspired by existing theories, praxeological models and experience realities.

An ideal type is a construction obtained by conceptually heightening specific aspects of reality, for example relationships. A type helps us understand and think about reality by constructing relationships that exist in reality, but which are emphasised in the constructed and consolidated type. Ideal types are therefore pure constructs of relationships. The requirement for an acceptable emphasis is that they are 'sufficiently motivated' and 'objectively probable'. This makes them sufficiently adequate to heighten a causal process of mechanisms. Although these constructs need not be proven, there is a need for evidence in support of this objective probability. This results in scientifically acceptable value added to knowledge of 'concrete cultural phenomena in their interconnections, their causes, and their significance' (Weber 1968; Whimster 2007).²

Ideal types are representations of modelled behaviour reduced to its essence, which therefore has a 'pure' flavour and could be considered as pure types with features of models, such as modules and verifiable causal links. But they are more than common denominators of reality, because of their intrinsic causal coherence. Their purpose is not so much to feed a praxeology, but to help interpret complex realities. (Bouckaert and Halligan 2008: 212).

It became clear that the maintain ideal type kept the classical Weberian system by tightening up traditional controls (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004: 186) and generally 'squeezing' the existing system of administration and law. The German Federal level would be a good fit for this maintain ideal type.

The modernise ideal type is predicated on the distinctiveness of public provision, and the need to strengthen rather than to weaken or dilute the state. We labelled this as the Neo-Weberian State (NWS) with two variations of the ideal type. The first 'emphasises the need for professional, performance-oriented management on the assumption that public servants are often full of initiative and will improve their own operations once they are freed from heavy bureaucratic regulation from further up the traditional hierarchies. The second, by contrast, stresses that the best route to modernization is to engage citizens and service users in a variety of participatory processes. It puts its faith in more "bottom-up" influence from civil society, whereas the first variant is more concerned to reduce the amount of "top-down" regulation' (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004: 187).

The marketise ideal type, which applies market-type mechanisms within the public sector, is close to NPM as a 'supermarket' state model (Christensen and Laegreid 2011). The minimise ideal type hands over as many tasks as possible to the market and therefore is 'hollowing out' the state machine (Frederickson and Frederickson 2006), resulting in the linking of politics to the economy, unmediated by bureaucratic structures.

In reality, however, we see hybrids and blends combining into (hybrid) ideal types. Maintain and modernise are combinable in reality, and mostly fit NWS, depending on the specificities of the policy field. Marketise and minimise are also combinable, mostly fitting NPM, and are certainly compatible from an ideological point of view.

² See also Bouckaert and Halligan (2008: 211).

The subsequent editions of *Public Management Reform* (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011, 2017) cover a reform timespan of about 30 to 35 years (from the end of the 1970s until about 2015). It became clear that the initial four ideal types were not covering the full range of possible and thinkable governance systems. The presence of network governance became a real practice and was not covered by the 4M's. We dropped our initial idea to add a fifth M (as in mediating or moderating). Hence, we shifted our level of ideal type definition and qualification from a verb (to maintain, to modernise, to marketise, to minimise), which corresponded to reform as an active and deliberate process of change, to an ideal type described as a driving principle, which triggers all mechanisms and determines an entire system. As a conclusion we observed, first, the driving principle of 'hierarchy' results initially in a Weberian, and ultimately in a neo-Weberian state (NWS). Second, the driving principle of 'market' results in New Public Management (NPM). Third, the driving principle of 'networks' results in New Public Governance (NPG).

While observing NPM being promoted and pushed by the OECD as *The Way Forward* (OECD 2015), and showcased by the most extreme NPM country, New Zealand, it also became clear that there is a 'limitation of discussing reform exclusively in terms of "more or less NPM". To put it briefly, we suggest that it is not simply a case of some countries being reluctant or opposed to the NPM: it is more the case that there are alternative and positive concepts of modernization, one of which we describe as the "Neo-Weberian State" (NWS)' (Pollitt & Bouckaert 2004: 3), especially for continental Europe.

A pivotal effort to surface NWS was the First Trans-European Dialogue (TED) in 2008, hosted by Professor Drechsler at Tallinn University of Technology (TUT), a combined effort of the European Group for Public Administration (EGPA) and Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe (NISPAcee). The papers of the conference theme ('Towards the Neo-Weberian State? Europe and Beyond') were published in the *NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy* (Volume 1, No. 2: Winter 2008–2009) as a special issue ('A distinctive European Model? The Neo-Weberian State').

This paper makes an attempt to describe this systemic shift from a Weberian to a neo-Weberian state (ideal type) model and to assess to what extent NWS is not just an ideal type model, but also becoming a reality and even a normative reform model.

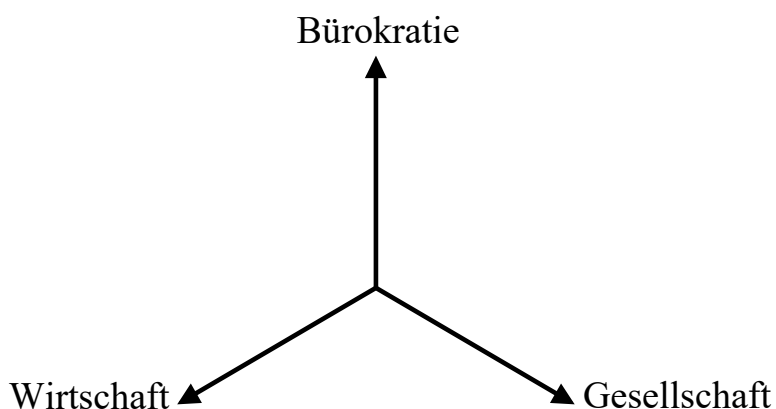
2. Elements of a Weberian ideal type state model

According to Sager and Rosser, 'Weber conceived of the state as a mechanistic phenomenon' (Sager and Rosser 2009: 1137). For Weber, the emerging private and public bureaucracies were an important indicator of a transition from a traditional, charismatic mode of administration, to a legal-rational mode of administration (Thompson 2003). Bureaucracy, as a state administration based on the rule-driven principle of hierarchy, defined its authority within the state (Torfing et al 2021). In general, rationalisation is the driver leading to hierarchy by rule-driven administrations leading to bureaucracies. As Thompson stated: 'The need for constant calculation and decision making resulted in a kind of organization based on acceptance of a rationalized *system* of operations' (Thompson 1976: 30) Weber called this control 'legal-rational'.

One could conclude that the main analytical vectors of the Weberian state are its state administration as a bureaucracy (*Bürokratie*), its economy (*Wirtschaft*), and its society (*Gesellschaft*) (see Figure 1). All dimensions are subject to, and driven by, 'rationalization'.

Figure 1. Components of the Weberian state model

Weberian
Ideal Type
Space



Source: Authors' own illustration

3. Some reasons to go beyond Weber and the Weberian state model

Weber assumed that the rational spirit of bureaucracy was so efficient and powerful that bureaucracy gained an irreversible momentum (1968: *Economy and Society*). This momentum was driven by competition in markets, competition among states and equal protection under the law (Weber 1968: 974). However, DeMaggio and Powell argue that:

The causes of bureaucratization have changed...Bureaucratization and other forms of homogenization emerge... out of structuration... This process, in turn, is effected largely by the state and the professions, which have become the great rationalizers of the second half of the twentieth century (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 147).

This implies a shift from a 'closed system of logic' to an 'open logic', taking 'bounded rationality', 'satisficing' (Simon 1957) and 'uncertainty' into account, which 'reflect something fundamental about the cultures surrounding complex organizations – the fact that our culture does not contain concepts for simultaneously thinking about rationality and indeterminateness...The newer tradition with its focus on organizational coping with uncertainty is indeed a major advance' (Thompson 2003: 9-10).

In his *Understanding Weber*, Sam Whimster dedicates a separate chapter on 'Going beyond Weber' in which he states that, 'The expansion in the scope of Weber's thinking should not be deliberated over as if it was a planned or preconceived strategy. Rather, it is perhaps better thought of as an efflorescence in Weber's remarkable capacity to develop an original thesis in a variety of different contexts' (Whimster 2007: 193-194).

The 'beyond Weber' discussion is also relevant for the debate of how well Weber 'travels' to non-Western, and non- or less developed democratic systems. Ang studies the Chinese context and contrasts classical 'public bureaucracies' with 'bureau-franchising' as a 'beyond Weber' model where market and hierarchy are combined (Ang 2017). Cho et al concluded that bureaucratic Weberian professionalism 'functions differently within different democratic contexts...[and] works better in less democratic countries in terms of its impact on bureaucratic performance' (Cho et al 2013: 131).

System transitions are multiple. From closed and certain to open and uncertain, impacting organisational theory; from national to global, impacting reform policy transfer theory; from state to society, impacting innovation theory; from consequences (results) to consequences and appropriateness (values) impacting behavioural theories; from administrations as standard bureaucracies to mixed variety hybrid organisations, impacting coordination theories.

These transitions suggest a positive need to go 'beyond Weber'. However, there is also a negative push away from Weber, emphasising all pathologies of bureaucracy such as 'red tape' or obstacles to innovation and change (Rhodes 1997). There are more fundamental criticisms based on the disbelief in 'legality' for legitimacy³ or the public choice theory-driven arguments where monopolistic growing bureaucracies push for budget maximalisation, reduced responsiveness to users and increasing inefficient delivery.

However, there are also arguments varying from a defence of (amended versions of) 'bureaucracy' to really 'praising bureaucracy' (du Gay 2000). In principle, bureaucracy could support economic growth. Evans and Rauch developed a Weberianness scale which shows that, 'Weberianness provides a parsimonious analytically satisfying account of observed differences in regional growth performance' (Evans and Rauch 1999: 760). Also, 'Bureaucratic effectiveness of public institutions, in a given country, is likely to be decisive for that country's ability to reduce poverty' (Henderson et al 2007: 528). Or, '[A] prima facie case has been made for the proposition that the arrival of post-bureaucratic organizational forms has tended to reduce both the completeness and the actual influence of organizational memories' (Pollitt 2009: 215).

In his 'praise to bureaucracy' du Gay states that 'If we allow radical humanist critique or entrepreneurial discourse to set the terms by which the bureaucratic ethos of office is to be understood and evaluated, then we might expect the job that the public bureau performs for us, among us, to become increasingly inconceivable. Perhaps it is time, once again, to appreciate the ethos of bureaucratic office – albeit in a suitably contextualized manner, as a positive extension of the repertoire of human possibilities rather than merely as a dehumanizing or disempowering subtraction' (du Gay 2000).

There is a *theoretical* debate between, on the one hand, the 'organisational' theories, which include the Weberian frameworks that consider bureaucracy and hierarchy as functional, effective and efficient, and, on the other hand, the public choice theories, which consider bureaucracies as economically and administratively inefficient (Farrell and Morris 1999). For public choice theories, 'Three specific characteristics of public bureaucracy are believed to lead to a lack of efficiency

³ See also Stivers (2000).

and effectiveness: the monopolistic structure of public service markets, the absence of valid indicators of organizational performance, and the large size of many government agencies' (Boyne 1999b: 43).

There is an *ideological* debate between two schools, on the one hand following Weber's argument in *Economy and Society*, and confirmed by Polanyi (1944), that bureaucracy is a tool for (capitalist) growth, and on the other hand the 'Smithian view', that government is the enemy of that growth (Evans and Rauch 1999: 749).

There is a *practical* debate that analyses, for example, health and education (i.e. UK GPs, head-teachers and social workers) which states that, 'Market-based reforms were intended to undermine key characteristics associated with bureaucracy' (Farrell and Morris 1999: 35). However, that debate concludes that, 'Public services are not "beyond bureaucracy"' (Farrell and Morris 1999: 36).

On top of the transitions and the debate, there is the observation that, 'Basic political and legal issues of responsible management in a postmodern era are inadequately defined and addressed' (Lynn 2001: 155). That should make us consider the question of what is 'beyond Weber', even when bureaucracies could be necessary, but not sufficient to combine stable service delivery with chronic crises in governance in a context of required innovations.

A range of new models has been proposed, specifically the Neo Weberian State (NWS) model based on hierarchy, New Public Management (NPM) based on market and New Public Governance (NPG) based on networks (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017). This paper focuses on NWS, and its design and potential as an answer to future governance needs.

4. Constructing the NWS 'ideal type' model

A crucial debate is whether public administration makes the modern state or whether the state makes public administration (Stillmann 1997). In any case, designing NWS is about 'institutions' and 'institutional design', even when some scholars observe a crisis of administrative sciences (Bull 2012). 'In this mode, like NPM and NPG, NWS serves as an omega (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011: 119).

Moving 'beyond Weber' obviously raises the question of the direction of 'neo'. Changing bureaucracies is certainly part of the 'modernisation' of systems. According to Riggs, the dynamics of industrialisation, democratisation and nationalism as expressions of 'modernity' have implications for dynamic changes of bureaucracy and public administration; for example the New Public Administration movement 'sought to democratize bureaucracy by inducing officials to be more responsive to the clientele they affected and had to work with' (Riggs 1997: 349; see also the debates of Minnowbrook I). Rethinking bureaucracies implied a range of hypothesised (underlying) dynamics that have been modelled over time, based on life cycles, dialectics or evolutions (Kaufman 1981: 8).

A starting position, in a set of core claims, in Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004) was that the three dimensions of the Weberian space (see Figure 1) changed their nature. Two spaces could be

defined. There is an *actor space* with three dimensions: the state with its public sector; businesses with the private-for-profit sector; and society with its not-for-profit sector. There is a *driver space* (see Figure 2) with three vectors which trigger and drive these actors to action within and between their spheres using a range of mechanisms: hierarchy (with HTM or hierarchy-type-mechanisms), markets (with MTM or market-type-mechanisms) and networks (with NTM or network-type-mechanisms). Vectors adjust their content to a dual actor space and driver space. The driver space defines a consolidated HMN governance space for the three actors. Weber's rationalisation then turns into a combined logic of consequences and appropriateness.

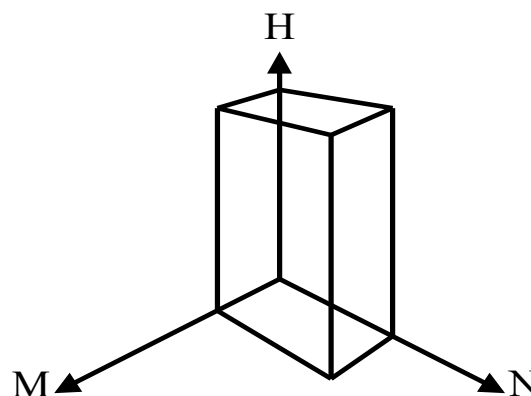
Hierarchy remains the most common coordination mechanism: 'Authority exercised through a disciplined hierarchy of impartial and professional officials' (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017: 22). Another core claim was the 'rule of law' and of the 'state': 'To modernize the traditional state apparatus so that it becomes more professional, more efficient and more responsive to citizens. Businesslike methods may have a subsidiary role in this, but the state remains a distinctive actor with its own rules, methods and culture' (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017: 22).

NWS 'has its strength in reminding us what states *can* do and how important democratic politics is as a guiding and monitoring force. It accepts that there are particular contexts where the state must coerce its citizens and where public order must be sustained, even at some price in terms of individual liberties. It places public service ethics closer to the centre of attention and avoids the simplistic assumption that everyone is a self-interested utility maximizer. On the other hand, the NWS perspective is much less clear about how the state should deal with some of the other powerful players in the policy process – big corporations, intergovernmental organizations and international non-governmental organizations or organizations running "data clouds". Furthermore, it tends to assume that public officials *will*, either always or usually, prove pliable to sensible, modernizing reforms' (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017: 214).

A fundamental core claim is also that this hierarchy-driven NWS is following not (just) a logic of Weberian 'rationalisation', but both the logics of consequences (results) and of *appropriateness* (inclusion, equity, values within the rule of law) (March and Olson 2009 2011). Both logics do not just guide the functioning of hierarchy itself within the state and its public sector, but they also guide how hierarchy is handling for-profit and not-for-profit actors, and also markets (M) and networks' (N) in its meta-governance of NWS.

Figure 2: NWS as an H-dominated and driven HMN governance space

**NWS -
Ideal Type**



Source: Authors' own illustration

Table 1. NWS: Weberian and neo-Weberian elements

'Weberian' elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reaffirmation of the role of the state as the main facilitator of solutions to the new problems of globalisation, technological change, shifting demographics and environmental threat. ▪ Reaffirmation of the role of representative democracy (central, regional and local) as the legitimating element within the state apparatus. ▪ Reaffirmation of the role of administrative law – suitably modernised – in preserving the basic principles pertaining to the citizen-state relationship, including equality before the law, privacy, legal security and the availability of specialised legal scrutiny of state actions. ▪ Preservation of the idea of a public service with a distinctive status, culture and – to some extent, though perhaps not as much as in the past – terms and conditions.
'Neo' elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shift from an internal orientation towards bureaucratic rule-following towards an external orientation towards meeting citizens' needs and wishes. The primary route to achieving this is not the employment of market mechanisms (although they may occasionally come in handy), but the creation of a professional culture of quality and service. ▪ Supplementation (not replacement) of the role of representative democracy by a range of devices for consultation with, and the direct representation of, citizens' views (this aspect being more visible in the northern European states and Germany at the local level than in Belgium, France or Italy). ▪ In the management of resources within government, a modernisation of the relevant laws to encourage a greater orientation on the achievement of results, rather than merely the correct following of procedures. This is expressed partly in a shift in the balance from <i>ex-ante</i> to <i>ex-post</i> controls, but not a complete abandonment of the former. It may also take the form of a degree of performance management. ▪ A professionalisation of the public service, so that the bureaucrat becomes not simply an expert in the law relevant to his or her sphere of activity, but also a professional manager, oriented to meeting the needs of his/her citizen/users.

Source: Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011: 118-119

4.1 From bureaucracy (*Bürokratie*) to hierarchy

According to du Gay (2005: 1-3) 'bureaucracy... has proven remarkably resilient... bureaucratic forms of organization have played, and continue to play, a vital and productive role in ordering existence in a number of domains – public and private, governmental and voluntary.' However, bureaucracy is not just an instrumental and organizational expression of hierarchy as a system driver. Bureaucracy, as hierarchy, shifts from instrument to institution (Olson 1997, 2006).

A 'renewed concern with hierarchical forms of management' (du Gay 2005: 2) has 'upgraded a classical focus on bureaucracy'. This upgrading could also happen through 'bending' bureaucracy, which is 'not the same as transcending it' (Newman 2005: 206): 'Rather than a shift to network governance, many practitioners experience themselves as undergoing a resurgence of bureaucratic modes of (hierarchical) governing' (Newman 2005: 207). This also includes a reference to the 'bureau' as a unit of governance (Goodsell 2005).

This working paper will not develop the transformation of 'economy' (*Wirtschaft*) to for-profit business with market, nor the transition from 'community' (*Gemeinschaft*) to 'society' (*Gesellschaft*) and not-for-profit with 'network'.

4.2 Hierarchy versus market

According to Williamson, in line with economic neo-institutionalist transaction cost, it is necessary to provide an economic appreciation for alternative modes of governance, even for an administration such as the State Department and its possible privatisation (Williamson 1999: 307-308). Williamson concludes that, 'There is an efficiency place for public bureaucracy, but that all modes of governance (markets, hybrids, firms, regulation), of which public bureaucracy is one, need to be kept in their place' (Williamson 1999: 306).

Recognising that 'politics and economics are different,' Williamson answers the question, 'Can a private bureaucracy, with or without support of regulation, replicate the attributes of public bureaucracies?' by stating that, 'Replication of a public bureau by a private firm, with or without the support of regulation, is impossible' (Williamson 1999: 311).

The interaction between hierarchies and markets is about 'why some services are provided by government, but also how the efficient mix of public services changes over time' (MacLeod 1999: 345). That is linked to an 'optimal mix between government and markets as a problem in dynamic transaction cost economics' (MacLeod 1999: 345). However, even when reforms are aimed at a shift from hierarchy to markets, 'the supposed "transformation" of market structures in the public sector seems to have been exaggerated' (Boyne 1999b: 45). There are four reasons: 'Some services have continued to operate largely through hierarchy rather than contracts... allocation of central government resources to local agencies has continued to reflect estimates of service need... the link between new "structures" and changes in "conduct" in the public sector seems to have been weakened by bureaucratic resistance... the new market arrangements have involved little direct consumer choice between alternative suppliers' (Boyne 1999b: 45).

4.3 Hierarchy versus network

There is a theoretical school that claims that a post-bureaucratic system leads to a networked system (Klijn and Koppenjan 2015). This shift is supposed to be the result of a systemic tendency away from hierarchy to networks, in combination with a de-bureaucratisation and de-regulation policy. This combined tendency and policy was a reaction to an increasingly perceived 'iron cage' which needed to be dismantled: 'The "iron cage" became less a matter of technical expertise and economic efficiency and much more an issue of cultural legitimation and political stabilization' (Reed 2015: 124). Reed continues to state: 'Post-bureaucratic/network theory tries to convince us that we have reached a period in human history and development where the "variable geometry" of network organizing is strong and powerful enough to displace, marginalize, and eventually replace the "fixed geometry" of bureaucratic organization' (Reed 2015: 133).

As a result, combining H with N results in a 'networked bureaucratic world' where "public administration is now less hierarchical and insular and is increasingly networked' (O'Toole 1997: 443). One of the reasons for broadening the HN reflection is to put H in a context of effective

democratic governance. According to O'Toole, 'The main issue... is how, not whether, democratic ideals can be woven more tightly into the fabric of administration' (O'Toole 1997: 444) especially since, 'public administrators may be well positioned to help facilitate the horizontal development of network arrays while they also encourage within these arrays a public-interested character' (O'Toole 1997: 457).

4.4 NWS as HMN: A whole-of-government (WoG) approach in a whole-of-society (WoS) space

One of the crucial points of attention for effective policies and service delivery is co-ordination (Bouckaert et al 2010). Shifting from managing single organisations to governing clusters of organisations, which deliver outputs to realise shared outcomes, to realise common policies, is becoming a necessity to realise, for example the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (UN World Public Sector Report 2018; UN CEPA 2018), as well as to fight major crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic or upcoming crises (Bouckaert et al 2021).

This has pushed for a vertical consolidation with a whole-of-government perspective (WoG), which integrates levels of government from central (and European) to local government. It also pushes for horizontal consolidation, partnerships and cooperation with a whole-of-society (WoS) perspective, which connects public sector organisations with private sector organisations, NGOs and citizen groups. According to Putnam, a civic community stimulates market-based economic developments as well as effective government: 'This history suggests that *both* states *and* markets operate more efficiently in civic settings' (Putnam 1993: 181).

Within a NWS setting, the public sector takes the lead by ensuring meta-governance of hierarchies, markets and networks, and by including this WoG approach within a WoS approach following both the logic of consequences and the logic of appropriateness.

5. Exploring the dynamics of the HMN space of NWS

Reform in the public sector does not consist of one iteration where a 'solution' is solving a 'problem'. It is a complex set of measures in a dynamic sequence of interactions between problems and solutions, which may generate new problems.

First, a solution may not be the answer to the question to be solved. In some cases, the features of the solution do not cover the failures of the problem. In some cases, this is a combined result of not analysing and evaluating a problem sufficiently, along with copy-pasting solutions offered by others in different conditions. Second, even when the solution is an answer to the problem, the solution may not be well-implemented. This is the case where, for example, deregulation sometimes became so extreme that functional market conditions were disturbed. Also, marketisation did not always follow the conditions of the output specificity of a specific policy field. Third, even when solutions answer problems and are well-implemented, in some cases these solutions became objectives in themselves and turned into a belief system, which shifted to an ideological principle, as in, 'The market is always right'.

One could read the reform shifts from H to M, from M to N with M, and from MN back to H, as such a dynamic sequence of interactions between problems and solutions.

The general reform narrative, almost like a syllogism, is:

(1) H, as bureaucracy is dysfunctional and negative (see King and Stivers 1998; Stivers 2008), therefore there is a need for a shift to M, since M is functional and performing, however, M failures are emerging, therefore there is a need to shift and/or add

(2) N as a 'third way', however, N seems not to be a panacea, therefore, especially in periods of crises, there is a need to shift back to

(3) H, even when M and N stay partly on board.

(1) From H to M

Yes, since markets (or quasi-markets or deregulated markets) solve all the failures of H and bureaucracies. Competition drives to make efficiency gains and lower costs, based on information which is available and framed by minimal-cost-contracting (Williamson 1985).

But ultimately markets are not a panacea. Some production functions are too complex and have too high output specificities, which complicates monitoring. This triggers problems of co-ordination between supply or providers, and demand or purchasers.

One of the complicating elements is that for some public services there is a disconnection between the different roles taken by citizens as customers, such as decide, pay, use and benefit (for example kindergartens or prisons), which are not compatible with a 'competitive' playing field.

However, markets and quasi-markets, which are using adversarial contracts, have some problems which may turn into failures, based on the conditions for functional markets and/or quasi-markets, such as sufficient competition for pushing prices downwards, sufficient levels of transparency of information for providers and purchasers, and sufficiently low costs for contracting and co-ordination. It is clear that in sectors such as health or social care this is not the case.⁴

This is due to a range of reasons such as, for example, rather small numbers of providers and complex production functions, because of the specificities of the services provided.

(2) Therefore: From M to N:

Yes, networks are using obligational contracts which are much more fit for purpose in contexts which need more open-ended arrangements based on goodwill and shared values: 'This is based on the assumption that many of the costs associated with markets could be reduced if purchasers and providers were able to collaborate more effectively' (Kirkpatrick 1999: 9). A preference for networks is also derived from an assumption that these mechanisms work well in the corporate sector (Pollitt 1993: 7) and travel well to the public sector: 'A common view is that arm's length contractual relationships are less appropriate than more collaborative approaches to working... [T]he most appropriate governance structure in future will be some intermediate form of quasi-market (embedded in social networks)' (Kirkpatrick 1999: 9).

⁴ See Kirkpatrick (1999) for local government in the UK; see Aulich (1999) for local government in Australia.

But networks also generate problems: 'The study of networks raises issues of equivalent importance to the study of bureaucracy and democratic accountability... Accountability can no longer be specific to an institution' (Rhodes 1996: 667).

(3) Therefore: From H to M and N, and back to H?

Yes, 'Literature on quasi-markets tends to over-exaggerate the advantages of networks and ignore the potential benefits of 'traditional' hierarchy' (Kirkpatrick 1999: 12).

Boyne (1999b) concludes for the UK New Labour reforms that the combined effort of upsizing rather than downsizing, insourcing rather than outsourcing, and releveling rather than abolishing 'amount to a shift away from markets and contracts and towards bureaucracy and hierarchy' (Boyne 1999b: 48). He adds that 'Shifts from one organizational form to another are likely to be difficult, partly because of professional and managerial resistance to change' (Boyne 1999a: 2).

In studying compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) to make local government in Victoria, Australia, more 'business-like' and market-oriented, Aulich (1999) observes new processes (but with compliance orientation), client-provider split (but generating uncertainty and tensions), strategic management (but in a pragmatic way) and also organisational capture by senior bureaucrats. Aulich concludes that CCT and its push to more market 'have not reshaped councils as post-bureaucratic organizations at this stage' (Aulich 1999: 43).

The concepts of 'bureaucracy' and 'post-bureaucracy' also trigger some controversy. According to Höpfl, 'If "Weberian bureaucracy" is equated in the old way with hierarchy, elements of bureaucracy are bound to be found in any organization. It will also be easy enough to identify non-bureaucratic (i.e. non-hierarchical) elements... But if bureaucracy is inherently flexible, for example, and is compatible with all manner of different arrangements, then what have been diagnosed as 'post-bureaucratic' arrangements must appear as merely variants within bureaucracy... Given this point of reference, the advent of "post-bureaucracy" would require either the complete disappearance of hierarchies, which is inconceivable, or the identification of some arrangements as inherently incompatible with bureaucracy' (Höpfl 2006: 19).

5.1 Dynamics of change between H, M and N could also have a range of drivers

In some cases there are clear *ideological choices* against H. There is a 'failure in much of this literature to evaluate all possible alternatives to markets. This means that far less emphasis is placed on the possibility of a return to hierarchy as a future governance structure for public services' (Kirkpatrick 1999: 10). This theoretical bias is related to 'labour's "modernization" agenda for public service [and] is based upon the assumption that a "third way" is possible. By definition this excludes other alternatives, such as hierarchy, from the equation' (Kirkpatrick 1999: 12).

There is also a way to understand the dynamics in the NWS space with H, M and N through *contingency theory and pragmatism*. The choice between H, M and N should be a matter of 'practicality' instead of 'ideological conviction' (Rhodes 1996: 653): 'To markets and hierarchies, we can now add networks. None of these structures for authoritatively allocating resources and exercising control and co-ordination is intrinsically "good" or "bad". The choice is not necessarily or

inevitably a matter of ideological conviction but of practicality: that is, under what conditions does each governing structure work effectively' (Rhodes 1996: 653).

A third approach, linked to *historical neo-institutionalism*, especially path dependency, could state that 'It is unlikely that any government will be able to re-establish older forms of hierarchical control' (Kirkpatrick 1999: 12).

5.2 Remaining windows of opportunity for H

Even when institutional economics recognises the strengths of H as bureaucracy (Ouchi 1980), it is accepted that 'Bureaucracy remains the prime example of hierarchy or co-ordination by administrative order and, for all the recent changes, it is still a major way of delivering services' (Rhodes 1996: 653).

There are also new pro-bureaucracy schools in organisational theory which emphasise the 'more secure, bureaucratic contracts of employment and how these can help to foster employee loyalty and flexibility' (Kirkpatrick 1999: 12).

Currently, crises governance, whether it is the terrorism threats since 9/11 (2001), the global financial and banking crisis (2008), the Japanese Fukushima disaster (2011) or the Covid-19 pandemic (2020-2022), demonstrate that only or predominantly M, or only or predominantly N, would not have managed or handled these crises. The state is back and neo-liberal obsessions with the market are losing momentum.

Also, as well as routine service delivery and crises governance, mechanisms to trigger innovation ultimately – and effectively – seem to come from the state, with its public sector and its hierarchy (Mazzucato 2013, 2018, 2021).

In general, Olson 'questions the fashionable ideas that bureaucratic organisation is obsolescent and that there has been a paradigmatic shift from (Weberian) bureaucracy to market organisation or network organisation' (Olson 2006: 2).

5.3 Typology of dynamics between H, M and N

Shifting to new systems and moving between 'pure' ideal systems (and their quasi-versions) could follow a range of patterns.

There could be a *sequential dynamic*: from bureaucracy and H to M to N and back to H. This logical try-out could be seen as a chronological sequence. However, in applying this to the NHS, Exworthy et al conclude: 'The supposition of paradigm shifts is too simplistic: the three organisational forms always co-existed, and continue to do so' (Exworthy et al 1999: 15).

This brings us to *simultaneous dynamics*, which combine different intensities of H, M and N, as Olson shows for the EU: 'The European Union also illustrates that market building and network building do not exclude bureaucratic organization... Public administration is organized on the basis of authority as well as competition and cooperation' (Olson 2006: 14,18).

This brings us to *hybridization, blending and quasi- or pseudo models* (sub infra) and the empirical question of *converging dynamics*, which is still a pending debate: 'The inevitability and

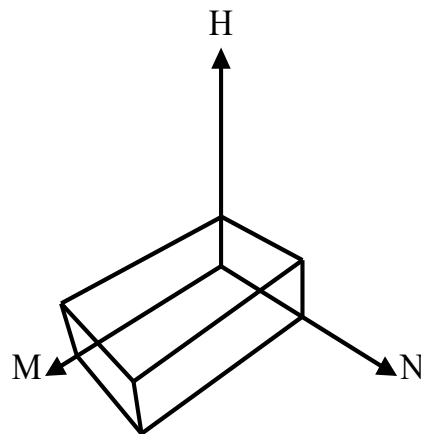
convergence hypothesis is not supported by empirical observations' (Olson 2006: 13). However, Pollitt (2007) observes convergence and divergence in the European reform scene.

6. NWS as Hmn, not HMN

According to Exworthy et al, 'The types do not represent a two-dimensional continuum, with markets and hierarchy occupying opposite ends of a linear spectrum in the middle. They are better viewed in orthogonal or three-dimensional terms' (Exworthy et al 1999: 20). Figure 2 provides a three-dimensional space where initially H, M and N are analytically equal and separate drivers. However, the question is about the leading driver and the proportions in a HMN-mix which create governance spaces. When M would be a dominant vector, in size and by dominating the two other vectors, the ideal type model can be labeled NPM, as in Figure 3.

Figure 3: NPM as an M-dominated and driven HMN governance space

NPM -
Ideal Type



Source: Authors' own illustration

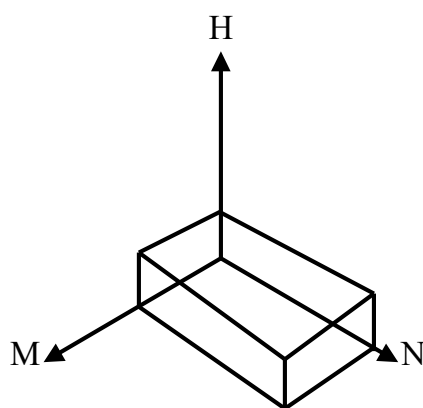
In its essence, NPM is driven by market mechanisms to deliver services. The NPM ideal type ultimately results in a 'market state' where citizens are reduced to customers. As customers they are subject to supply and demand of goods and services. The customer-provider split ensures this interaction. Where full market competition is not possible, quasi-markets are designed, even resulting in public-public or public-private competition. The legitimacy of this model is based on its assumed efficient performance. This results in a shift from 'traditional forms of governance through state hierarchies' (Newman 2005: 193) to markets and networks with deregulation, co-production and partnerships.

When N would be the dominant and driving vector, in size and by dominating the two other vectors, the ideal type model can be labeled NPG, as in Figure 4. In its essence, NPG is driven by networks with shared values and objectives (Kostakis 2011). This NPG ideal type model ultimately results in a 'network state' with consensual network members where mutual trust is a bonding principle to deliver services. The legitimacy is based on shared values and a culture of co-design, co-decide, co-produce and co-evaluate.

In looking at the HMN space from N as a 'commons' perspective, Palumbo and Scott state that, 'As a set of managerial practices, the commons are the precipitate of the successful cooperative strategies... based on a larger motivational base than that underlying hierarchies and markets... A non-conventional model of bureaucracy could employ this social capital in several ways. First, it could use the commons to open new democratic spaces and thus deepen the legitimacy of the political system. Second, it could rely on them to redefine the political articulation of the modern state so as to strengthen collective identities. Third, it could integrate the commons in a revised system of social checks and balances which would increase accountability while reducing the costs of government. In short, a non-conventional model of bureaucracy views the commons as a pivotal medium for bringing about a multi-level form of governance' (Palumbo and Scott 2005: 302).

Figure 4: NPG as an N-dominated and driven HMN governance space

NPG -
Ideal Type



Source: Authors' own illustration

6.1 Hierarchy as the ever-present vector in HMN

When H would be the dominant vector, in size and by dominating the two other vectors, the ideal type model can be labeled NWS, as in Figure 2.

There are many reasons, and also empirical evidence, to confirm that H ultimately dominates and should/could guarantee functioning markets and networks. For networks, Palumbo and Scott state: 'What, if anything, justifies state action and public bureaucracy?... Since the community connected to a global common is the nation state as a whole, or several national communities, only state agencies or interstate organizations seem to have the decision-making power to raise the resources and expertise needed to run the commons properly and effectively' (Palumbo and Scott 2005: 298). Not only is H able to ensure N, but it can also protect N against M: 'For us, public bureaucracy finds a further justification in protecting the commons from enclosure by the market and the corrosive activity of free-riders. Public bureaucracies can bring this goal about not by replacing network with hierarchies, but by empowering local communities with the decision-making power needed to deter free-riding and foster social cooperation' (Palumbo and Scott 2005: 299).

This is in line with an argument that H has the capacity to ensure co-ordination and meta-governance of H, M and N (Meuleman 2018; Bouckaert et al 2022) within a WoG/WoS framework⁵. This is also in line with the 'imperative of cross-sector working' between the three actors (public, private-for-profit, civil society not-for-profit) to ensure service delivery (Butler and Gilchrist 2016).

6.2 Different H for different models

It could be observed that the nature of H changes according to the contextual space of NWS, NPM or NPG. H in NWS is based on law-based authority. H in NPM is related to the hierarchy of a 'principle' to its 'agents' in its markets. H in NPG is most probably more informal H in its networks.

'Some of the biggest NPM reforms (such as the introduction of a quasi-market within the UK NHS from 1989) were implemented by a fierce use of hierarchical authority, beating down opposition and criticism. Hierarchical authority has also often been used to make NPG partnerships of NPM contracting out mandatory' (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017: 114).

According to Diefenbach and Sillince, 'hierarchical order is quite persistent' and 'hierarchy is much more widespread than thought' (Diefenbach and Sillince 2011: 1515). They conclude that. 'Whenever formal hierarchy decreases, informal hierarchy increases... people apply the dominant principle(s) of formal hierarchal ordering also to the informal ordering of social structures and processes' (Diefenbach and Sillince 2011: 1530).

6.3 NWS: upgrading H with democracy

Weber was aware that a technocratic and rational vision on bureaucracy could lead to its dangers of (expert) dominance and insulation. That is why a democratic control was needed, based on a distinction between politician and civil servant.

What are the checks and balances in NWS? Is H being balanced by MN. Is MN balanced by H? Is H balanced by democratic mechanisms? In line with the historical Friedrich/Finer debate where Friedrich relied on the internal professional ethics of civil servants to ensure mechanisms of accountability, Finer relied on democratic mechanisms of accountability between the public sector with its government and parliament. From this point of view, it should be taken into account that 'dissatisfaction with bureaucratic performance spreads, and the capacity of representative institutions to monitor and inspire their bureaucracies has become increasingly problematic' (Riggs 1997: 350).

According to Olson, 'Democracy is a distinct political order that provides a distinct historical-institutional context for governance and design' (Olson 1997: 206). This implies that hierarchies in democracies will be different from hierarchies in non-democratic systems.

The academic disconnection, in many countries, of political science and public administration, has also triggered a biased critical thinking of how bureaucracy as a hierarchy should interact with politics and democratic institutions. Differences in politico-administrative eco-systems impact in

⁵ See also Christensen and Laegreid (2007).

different ways on how to reconcile bureaucracies in democracies. For example, according to Meier's thought-provoking analysis, the US needs 'more bureaucracy and less democracy' (Meier 1997) – at least it did at the end of the 1990s.

However, the logic could also be reversed. According to Cho et al, 'It is likely that the level of democracy within a particular national context will also influence the way administrative features associated with that state's bureaucracy function, such as those associated with the WB [Weberian bureaucracy]. . . in more democratically developed contexts, it may be better for bureaucracy to be less insulated than in developing contexts' (Cho et al 2013: 131).

As Savage states, 'Formal associations remain crucial forms which are essential for a democratic polity with an active civil society' (Savage 2005: 311).

There could be a paradoxical tension between bureaucracy, and therefore H, and democracy. On the one hand there is a Weberian bureaucracy as a closed 'iron cage', which, following its strengthening instrumental and technocratic rational scientific drive could become disconnected and self-contained. On the other hand, democracy builds upon and needs bureaucratic administrations: 'Institutions, ideas, and values are woven into the complex fabric that constitutes democratic governance' (Lynn 2001: 145).

Emphasising only a strong state may result in a biased focus on reforms. For this reason, it is necessary 'to include the aspects of civil society and participation in the discussion. In that sense, it could be argued that the NWS presupposes a viable democracy next to the Weberian bureaucracy' (Drechsel and Kattel 2009: 97).

As a result, within NWS, the embeddedness of H in democracy ensures a dynamic and open vision of NWS beyond a pure instrumental drive by rationalisation (Stivers 2001). As Olson states: 'A better theoretical understanding of how key features of democratic institutions influence the relative importance of design in institutional change, requires ideas beyond those portraying design as a question of finding the most cost-effective tool for achieving immediate policy benefits' (Olson 1997: 224-225). NWS design should therefore be following both logics of consequences and appropriateness.

Weber's instrumental vision of bureaucracy underscores its superiority because of its procedural rationality. However, Weber's 'iron cage' image states that, 'Humanity is condemned to accept bureaucracy's human costs because modern society cannot do without its technical benefits' (Adler 2012: 247). For that reason, NWS should be an open and democratic model in combination with elements of markets and networks.

Since bureaucracy is a 'cornerstone of the modern state and of representative democratic governmental regimes' (du Gay 2020: 78), it could protect against political shifts towards anti-democratic or illiberal versions of democracy (Hajnal 2020). However, a question is whether that is an adequate answer to and endorsement of a 'deep state'. Is NWS an effective tool against 'deconstructing the administrative state'? (Kettl 2017).

7. NWS: from ideal type to reality?

We believe that what we see in the continental European states is a distinctive reform model, one which we earlier labelled the neo-Weberian state (NWS) (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017: 121).

7.1 NWS: H with MN, H is necessary and indispensable, but not sufficient

To move from an ideal type to reality, NWS needs to balance H with M and N, as Olson also confirms: 'Bureaucratic organization is part of a repertoire of overlapping, supplementary, and competing forms coexisting in contemporary democracies, and so are market organization and network organization' (Olson 2006: 18).

However, this NWS reality implies some essential features (see also Table 1), even when there are significant variations between (continental European) countries. These fundamental core premises of the NWS ideal type are:

- A democratic state as a frame for governance and decision-making;
- The 'rule of law' as the supreme driving principle, which results in 'hierarchy' as a dominant organising principle, which also leads to an open, accessible, participatory, affordable, transparent, sound and trustworthy 'bureaucracy' and public sector for all citizens;
- A responsible, accountable, and significant H, which also pro-actively directs M and N, following not just logics of consequences (for its performance), but also logics of appropriateness (which explicitly includes equity and inclusion). This includes pro-active interactions and (hierarchical) use of market and network mechanisms from a whole of government point of view, for a whole of society perspective with private for-profit, civil society not-for-profit and public sector actors.

This should result in a functional combination of (i) guaranteed and inclusive routine service delivery, combined (ii) with effective handling of chronic crises governance and fueled by (iii) constant innovations for government and society. NWS is responsible and accountable for these three major systemic missions. In this context, there is space for improvement and upgrading of the Weberian system to NWS, to adjust to circumstances and to generate the capacity to solve or cope with major societal problems.

In line with NPM and NPG, there is a narrative of hollowing out the state (Frederickson and Frederickson 2006; Stivers 2008) to international and global levels, to markets, and to society at large. It is also stated that, 'The more a government is oriented towards policy outcomes, rather than organisational outputs, the less it is able to exercise control through hierarchical channels flowing down through bureaucratic organisations' (Newman 2005: 194). However, with NWS this does not need to be the case when a functional H is also directing functionality of partnerships with M and N, following both logics of consequences and appropriateness.

As Reed concludes, 'Instead of the "fixed geometry" characteristic of bureaucratic organisational forms defined by extended hierarchies, bloated technocracies, and intransigent autarkies, the process of hybridization – in which elements of markets, hierarchies, communities, and networks

are loosely combined – may produce a situation in which far more complex regimes of coordination and control will be required to hold them together in some way or another. But these “neo-bureaucracies” are unlikely to exhibit the fully developed variable geometry of ‘heterarchy’... because they require and secure a far higher degree of continuity and stability’ (Reed 2005: 134).

If or when it is true that networks (and network theories) and markets (and market theories) are too thin to keep the system effectively together, and if a NWS logic and philosophy does not allow for experimenting with the basic and fundamental infrastructure of governance systems such as the state and its administration, there is a need to recognise what Reed said: ‘Amongst all the hype about the virtual, post-bureaucratic, or networked organization, there is a very real need to re-assert the fundamental technical, political, and ethical virtues of Weberian-style bureaucratic organization that is in danger of being washed away in a naïve and disingenuous technological romanticism and historical determinism’ (Reed 2015: 136).

This confirms Selznick’s conclusion: ‘If there is a post-bureaucratic world, it will not be one in which bureaucracy is eliminated... Rather the new, non-bureaucratic forms will be essential leaven in the bureaucratic dough’ (Selznick 1992: 288).

7.2 Empirical evidence of NWS

Is NWS European (Drechsler 2005; Drechsler and Kattel 2009; Ferrera 2020) and is it within the European Union (Drechsler 2009)? One could observe that NPM could only develop, initially and substantially, in Anglo-Saxon countries which have a ‘common law’ base, which more easily leads to a ‘common management’ application. This kind of geographical correlation, which is referring to systemic path-dependency, could explain this reality, in the same way NWS seems to develop more easily in countries which have an ‘administrative law’ tradition, which shapes the conditions for specific managerial instruments and even for digital reforms. This kind of geographical correlation refers to a path-dependency of the Weberian, but also of Napoleonic, systems (Ongaro 2009).

In the US, Dunn and Miller (2007) criticise both NPM and ‘a relatively new European critique of NPM which its authors call the neo-Weberian state (NWS)’ (Dunn and Miller 2007: 345). Even with the eminent exception of Waldo’s ‘administrative state’ as a political theory of American public administration (1948), ‘Not many American scholars until recently have attempted to study the *state*, or even dare mention *state* in a book’ (Stillman 1997: 332). Stillman continues to comment on European administrative sciences: ‘Reason of state... continues to be prominent in the continental lexicon of Public Administration... the method of administrative logic is therefore largely deductive, not inductive. The centrality of the state, its historic evolution, and a positive law tradition that led to state autonomy all serve to define administrative sciences as a top-down enterprise with clear first principles from which to deduce correct approaches for thinking about Public Administration’ (Stillman 1997: 336).

In Germany, the local government new steering model (NSM) was a ‘real-time’ experiment of applying NPM-inspired reforms to transform its ‘Weberian’ bureaucracy (Kuhlmann et al 2008). After about ten years of implementation an evaluation concludes that a ‘comprehensive “paradigm shift” from the Weberian bureaucracy to a managerial NSM administration has not occurred’

(Kuhlman et al 2008: 48). Even when “old” methods of steering (legal rules and hierarchy) are being weakened before the “new” managerial ones,’ Kuhlmann et al conclude that NWS ‘has not been put into practice so far... Whether a neo-Weberian mixture of legalist and managerial elements will finally work still remains to be seen’ (Kuhlmann et al 2008: 48).

For the Northern European part, based on the COCOPS survey⁶ according to Greve and Ejersbo, ‘the overall development of Denmark can be described as development towards a neo-Weberian state in the digital era’ (Greve and Ejersbo 2016: 127). However, in a subsequent analysis of Nordic countries in general, and the Danish case in particular, Byrkjeflot et al state that, ‘The idea of NWS appears at first sight to suit that situation. There are many signs that Denmark, along with the other Nordic countries, is moving away from focusing mainly on management and markets that were associated with NPM or the purely networked ideal that characterizes some of the network governance/NPG thinking’ (Byrkjeflot et al 2018: 1000), even when they point to ‘some contradictions that lure in the emerging NWS concept’ (ibid: 1007).

In the Portuguese case, the NWS seems to fit the Weberian characteristics which are still identifiable in a more modernised administration (Mendes 2006). Ongaro compares the trajectories of reform of France, Greece, Portugal and Spain. He concludes that Napoleonic countries are between global paradigms and the neo-Weberian state (Ongaro 2009).

In summarising the reform paradigms in European central governments, based on the COCOPS survey, Andrews et al suggest that, ‘Multiple administrative reforms did indeed occur across Europe between 2008 and 2013, but that they were largely of the neo-Weberian/NPG form, especially reforms centred on improvements in transparency, collaboration and e-government’ (Andrews et al 2016: 275).

7.3 NWS and post-Soviet states in Central Europe

The emergence of ‘Weber’ has been essential for the post-soviet states of Central and Eastern Europe (Drechsler 2005).

In the Hungarian case, Jenei states that ‘without a functioning Weberian democratic system, without regulative and monitoring power of the state, the initial steps of “Public Management Reforms” result in uncertainties and deviations in the legal state and even strengthen corruption’ (Jenei 2009: 65). There was a sequence of first realising the ‘rule of law’, as part of realising the *acquis communautaire* to join the EU and then to introduce public management reforms. In the Hungarian case, a ‘Neo-Weberian state became a requirement... in which governmental actions are based on the rule of law, in which private enterprises are involved in quality competition in service delivery, and in which civil society organisations have full involvement in public policy-making, from decision making to service provision’ (Jenei 2009: 65).

Also, for the Estonian case it is accepted that it is desirable to initially ‘pursue the more stable options, that is, the “Weberian” elements of the NWS framework’ (Randma 2008: 72). Meanwhile,

⁶ See also Greve et al (2016).

there is a 'better suitability of the NWS than conventional Weberian bureaucracy' for the Estonian reforms (Randma 2008: 79).

For the Czech Republic, Potucek concludes that the NWS and its three interacting regulators (state, market and civil society) are compatible, complementary and not contradictory (Potucek 2008: 90-92).

The 'northern variant of the NWS foresaw a citizens' state, with extensive participation facilitated by a modernised system of public law that would guarantee rights and duties. Proponents of the central European variant of NWS favoured a professional state – modern, efficient and flexible, yet still uniquely identified with the "higher purposes" of the general interest' (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004: 100).

7.4 How well does NWS travel outside Europe?

There are not too many cases analysed. In Latin America, Ramos and Milanese studied the case of Uruguay: 'While in some areas of the state apparatus managerialist-type reforms of agencification and flexibility may be happening, in others, the trend will be towards neo-Weberian models of strengthening of central control' (Ramos and Milanese 2020: 273). But they also add: 'Unfortunately, the NWS has not been sufficiently theorized across the region yet' (ibid: 274).

A study on the Moroccan healthcare system concludes: 'Even supposing that NPM could offer a coherent paradigm, the imbalanced consideration of external pressures and incentives, and of the exigencies specific to developing countries, could well lead to the systematic failure of public sector reform... We therefore propose a rediscovery of bureaucracy, notably through the Neo-Weberian State model' (Errami and Cargnello 2018: 310).

It seems that NWS is only carefully, if at all, travelling outside continental Europe.

7.5 NWS, blends and hybrids, or quasi H, quasi M and quasi N

'The empirical map, in fact, is a pretty messy one, and shows every sign of remaining so. In reality, these ideal-type models are translated into blends and hybrids, sometimes depending on the policy field, and in many cases with mixtures within a country' (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017: 214)

HMN 'are not found in their pure form. All are treated here as ideal types' (Rhodes 1997: 46). In his 'stylized comparison of forms of economic organisation' (i.e. market, hierarchy and network), Powell speaks of 'mixing of forms' (Powell 1991: 269). In discussing the 'ideal types (or the poles of the continuum)', i.e. hierarchy and market, Bradach and Eccles state that 'transactions are rarely governed *solely* by market, hierarchy or trust, these mechanisms do serve as the building blocks for the complex social structures so common in organisational life' (Bradach and Eccles 1991: 277-278). Also, according to Thompson hierarchy, market, and network 'are partly separated but also partly overlapping' (Thompson 2003: 51).

That implies that in reality 'quasi' could be hybrids and/or blends, where 'hybrid' is a variation (weakening) of a pure ideal model and 'blend' is a combination of two or three models: 'In modern, pluralistic societies with a variety of criteria of success and different causal understandings, it is,

however, unlikely that public administration can be organized on the basis of one principle alone' (Olson 2006: 16).

For quasi H there are hybrids where the 'centre of government' is or has been weakened (OECD 2018). For policy coordination there are H blends where H co-exists with M and N for policy design (Bouckaert, Peters and Verhoest 2022).

For quasi M there are M blends: 'The NHS quasi-market exhibited a mix of private sector ideas and practices with public sector funding and regulation' (Exworthy et al 1999: 18). Drechsler refers to 'pseudo-markets' (Drechsler 2005: 96). As du Gay states: 'Simple contrasts between markets and hierarchies prove insufficient in capturing the major innovation in the art of governance that this mechanism represents [internal markets]...What we have here then is neither a traditional bureaucracy nor a free market but a governmentally constituted quasi-market' (du Gay 2000: 100-101).

For quasi N there is shifting from 'old' professional networks to 'new' networks which are 'more inclusive, embracing private, voluntary and informal links with governance' (Exworthy et al 1999: 19).

This HMN mix could take a range of options in reality. Three thinkable approaches of blending as 'differentiated' governance systems could be:

- A juxtaposition of HMN;
- A combined HMN: as 'water and oil' (Rhodes 1997: 47) or as marbled cake;
- Combined hybrids of HMN as the result of a 'chemical reaction' (Exworthy 1999: 20): 'Elements may react in different ways under different circumstances.'

To conclude how NWS appears as hybrid and blend in reality, it is useful to realise that, on the one hand, NWS is not just a Weberian system plus some other elements (of NPM and/or NPG): 'Careful reading of the "neo" elements will show that they do not add up to the familiar NPM recipe of disaggregation plus competition plus incentivization' (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011: 119). On the other hand, 'The organisational mix in the differentiated polity... it may be difficult to "pick and mix" the best features of the different forms to achieve the best overall policy' (Exworthy et al 1999: 20).

This also results in combined models. Greve and Ejersbo (2016) refer to the NWS in a digital model for Denmark. Campomori and Casula (2021) refer to 'the possible co-existence of the paradigms that are arising in the last decades to reinvigorate the public sector and to remedy the problems with NPM...the NPG paradigm, while safeguarding the principle of pro-active participation of citizens in the production of social and welfare policies, can work in combination with other post-NPM paradigms, and in particular with the NWS' (Campomori and Casula 2021: 12).

In conclusion: 'As such they [the three models] can serve as guiding heuristics or, beyond that, as visions. They can stimulate debates and provide frameworks for the analysis of specific reforms. What it is evident they do *not* do, however, is to provide a neat empirical map of where our 12 countries have come from, are now, or appear to be going' (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017: 213-214).

8. Is NWS a sustainable and resilient (ideal type) model?

The question of sustainability and resilience of an ideal type model is theoretical, practical and also normative (or ideological).

In 2004, Pollitt and I were aware that using the label neo-Weberian state may have surprised some continental experts. 'Among German scholars, for example, the modernisers have sometimes characterized themselves as anti-Weberian or, at least, as moving away from the *Welt on Max Weber*. We would not disagree with their contention that many of their reforms could be seen as diluting or adding new features to the original Weberian ideal type. Nor would we deny that the conservatives who opposed these modernisers could be seen as wanting to hang on to the old systems and the old values – as defenders of the Weberian heritage. Yet, looked at from the outside, what is striking in comparison with the core NPM states is how far the underlying assumptions of a positive state, a distinctive public service, and a particular legal order survived as a foundation beneath the various packages of modernizing reforms. What was going on, it seems, was the modernization of the Weberian tradition, not its outright rejection: a process of addition, not demolition (even if some of the additions fitted on the foundations rather awkwardly)' (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004: 100).

By the 2011 edition, several reactions were developed and Eastern European scholars began to debate how far the NWS could serve as a model for the reconstruction of their post-Communist administrations (Drechsler and Kattel 2009). In any case, NWS does not show a neat pattern of implementation. Certainly, with its hybrid and blended variants as modernisation reforms, 'the pattern is very rough and approximate, for both political and organisational reasons' (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004: 100).

Politically, governments change and may hold different visions of the future, so that, following elections, certain types of reform are de-emphasised and other types are given greater salience. A second set of political reasons for 'untidiness' is to be found among the pressures represented by external socio-economic forces and by political demands. This may result in conflicting objectives, for example between savings, performance improvement and pressure for accountability. Also, from an organisational point of view, different governments have different capacities for reform.

'The trajectories and rhetorics were significantly different as between, first, the Anglo-Australasian-American core NPM enthusiasts; second, the early and participatory modernizers in northern Europe (NWS, first variant); and third, the somewhat later, more managerially oriented modernizers in central Europe and the EU Commission (NWS, second variant)' (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004: 102). Even if a particular government *were* able to craft and implement a somehow 'model pure' reform, that would not mean that that public sector then became an equally pure example of NPM, NWS or NPG. That is because no reform could conceivably touch every aspect of the modern state simultaneously.

It is tempting to see a dialectic pattern beyond the Weberian state model. Shifting from anti-thesis (NPM and NPG) to synthesis (NWS) is not saying NWS is 'Weber' plus NPM, it is 'Weber' reacting, processing, transforming, reshaping some NPM and NPG instruments to make it compatible with the democratic authority of its H-driven State of Law. In any case, models express different

principles of organisation and different views of the preferable relationship between the state, the market sector and civil society (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017: 213).

From a normative point of view, NWS is protecting the 'polis' and the 'administrative state'. And NWS helps to prevent 'deconstructing the administrative state'. A hierarchy-driven bureaucracy in a democracy will be different from a hierarchy-driven bureaucracy in a non-democratic system since democracy 'provides a distinct historical-institutional context for governance and design' (Olson 1997: 206). Whereas a classical Weberian system, even with its tendency to shift toward more rationalisation, is more static in nature, NWS is, in essence, like democracy, 'an open-ended project and a "theme for development"' since 'democracies live with tensions and contradictions between institutions, principles and ordering ideas' (Olson 1997: 206). This is also in line with Lynn stating that 'structures and processes of the administrative state constitute an appropriate framework for achieving balance between administrative capacity and popular control on behalf of public purposes defined by electoral and judicial institutions, which are constitutionally authorized means for the expression of the public will' (Lynn 2001: 154).

NWS addresses upcoming debates and frames governance not without but *with* democracy, governance not without but *with* government, and governance not based on exclusion but on *inclusion*, three choices which are not guaranteed in systems based solely on markets (NPM) and/or solely on networks (NPG).

Building on Mazzucato's 'myths that impede progress' (2021: 25-56) and in line with her derived principles for a new political economy, flexible and dynamic hierarchies should drive and shape markets and networks (as partnerships and open participation) to create shared and inclusive societal values defined as outcomes. The eight Millennium Objectives (2000-2015) and the subsequent 17 Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030) are these whole of society outcomes which a NWS should ensure with its whole of government approach, even and especially beyond 2030.

We claim and hypothesise that NWS, much better and even contrary to NPM (market-driven) and NPG (network-driven), will ensure the three core functions of a whole of government strategy within a whole of society context: performing, inclusive and equitable service delivery, resilient crises governance, and effective innovation for government and society.

Performing, inclusive and equitable service delivery: how to organise service delivery in an economic, efficient, effective, inclusive and equitable way is a substantial research question. Debates on (where to organise) core functions for government (Sekera 2020), on contracting in and out, and on partnerships and cross-sector delivery (Gilchrist 2016; Ronalds 2016) are crucial elements in reform strategies. Defining optimal combinations of HMN is also different for different policy fields and should take output specificity into account. Market states have shifted from empowering citizens to empowering customers in a supply and demand setting by organising a provider/customer split. A crucial question remains how blends and hybrids of combined HMN, and under what conditions, will deliver performing, inclusive, and equitable service delivery. Significant NWS hierarchies, which are also driving markets and networks, should certainly also be considered.

Resilient crises governance: Past crises, whether in terrorism, finance, ecology, health or migration, could not be solved by only market-based or only network-based systems. States and centres of government, as hierarchies, where necessary, take the lead in handling crises and guiding markets and networks in a synergetic way⁷. This implies that NWS hierarchies are significant, and driving markets and networks.

Effective innovation for and from government for society: One of the emerging innovations is about digital government and society. There is a firm need to have legal frames for markets and networks to combine digital performance with digital appropriateness (privacy, transparency...). The European Commission, for example, drives the Connecting Europe Facility for Innovative and Secure Connectivity and the European Alliance for Industrial Data, Edge and Cloud. The digital strategy and the 2030 Digital Compass for the Commission and the EU is to be 'user-centric', 'data-driven' and 'agile' (European Commission 2018, 2021)⁸. Also, to fight the Covid-19 pandemic, government sponsored and pushed research allowed the market to respond and produce the vaccines (Mazzucato 2021). The same rationale applies to 'roadmapping for SDGs' (Miedzinski et al 2019). This implies that NWS hierarchies are significant, and driving markets and networks.

9. NWS: criticism and remaining questions for a research agenda

NWS evolved from an empirical observation to an ideal type, with a theoretical framing, and even as a possible normative reform programme. This is being debated from different angles.

In the context of international affairs studies, there has been a re-reading of Weber to re-conceptualise state-building by thinking in terms from neo-Weberian to post-Weberian approaches to state, legitimacy and state-building (Lottholz and Lemay-Hébert 2016: 1467).

From a critical theory perspective, Dunn and Miller comment on NPM and NWS as 'a commitment to a kind of instrumental rationality that has made it difficult for both to understand the contexts of meaning surrounding administrative reform' (Dunn and Miller 2007: 346).

From a 'Weber' point of view, Torbing et al state that, 'NWS appears to present a superficial characterization of a bureaucratic governance model that fails to do justice to Weber's complex thinking and argumentation as well as failing to appreciate the role of administrative statesmanship in shaping public governance and administration' and 'overlooks Weber's critical description of bureaucracy as an "iron cage"' (Torbing et al 2020: 85).

From an empirical point of view, since most countries have been influenced by both marketisation, managerialism and networks, 'few states can be characterized as "pure NWS" states' (Torbing et al 2020: 85), even if, 'The idea of NWS appears at first sight to suit that situation' (Byrkjeflot et al

⁷ For Covid-19: see Kuhlmann et al (2021).

⁸ See also Drechsler (2009).

2018: 1000). Obviously, since NWS, just like NPM and NPG are pure types, as ideal types they will and cannot appear in reality.

Distinguishing NWS from NPM and NPG (see Figures 1, 2, and 3) should prove that these models have very different theoretical identities and that NWS is not really a 'middle-of-the-road-argument, attempting to position itself as a pragmatic alternative to the NPM markets and managerialism and the NPG networks and co-creation processes. In a rather eclectic gesture, it tries to build parts of both governance paradigms into the NWS framework to produce the image of a more effective and friendlier state' (Torfing et al 2020: 85).

From a theoretical point of view, Byrkjeflot, du Gay and Greve, also based on an analysis of the Danish case, suggest talking about 'degrees of Weberianism rather than to distinguish between states that are (neo-)Weberian and those who are not' (Byrkjeflot et al 2018: 991). However, comparative studies clearly show that some countries, at some periods in time, are not following an NWS trajectory.

For Olson, 'Bureaucratic theory connotes a set of theoretical ideas and hypotheses concerning the relations between organisational characteristics and administrative mentality, behavior, performance, and change.' However, Olson follows and quotes Merton in stating that, 'It would be premature to refer to "the theory of bureaucracy", as though there existed a single, well-defined conceptual scheme adequate for understanding this form of organisation' (Olson 2006: 3 quoting Merton et al 1952: 17). The same may apply to NWS, with its theory and its functioning in reality following H as a driving principle in line with the logics of consequences and of appropriateness.

Obviously remaining questions⁹ are about how to define a functional mix of HMN in NWS; how to explain differences between (European) countries; and how to map and operationalise the process of transformation.

It is part of the research agenda to study how H-driven organisations and systems are consolidated and institutionalised as NWS in an HMN space. According to Selznick, to institutionalise is 'to infuse with value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand' (Selznick 1992: 233). The combined logics of consequences and appropriateness, in a democratic and rule of law-based system, is defining NWS.

According to Constatas, 'Only if a bureaucracy is rooted in a legal-rational order can it remain entirely a technical instrument and, hence, a responsible bureaucracy' (Constatas 1958: 409). However, it could be questioned whether that is the case when these bureaucracies are not part of a democratic system. This closed and instrumental approach to bureaucracy results in an 'iron cage' which is potentially dysfunctional and even threatening for an open society. Therefore, following the need to upgrade 'bureaucracy' from a rational tool and instrument to an institution as well (Olson 2006: 19), there is a need to consider 'hierarchy' as an institution. Hence, NWS is in line with (neo-) institutional theories with 'hierarchy' as a driving institutional mechanism and 'bureaucracy' as an institutional instrument. This institutional context refers to 'democracy', 'rule of law' and 'state of law'.

⁹ See also Lynn (2008).

10. In conclusion

The focus and assumption of this working paper is that NWS is much more capable of ensuring and combining sustainable and resilient performance with equity and inclusion than NPM and NPG. This applies to 'service delivery', to 'crises governance' and to 'innovation'. For this reason, NWS as a 'pure' type (ideal type) seems to turn into a reality, and moves to a desirable model of governance and reform which becomes necessary from a whole of society perspective for the future.

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