

Living in the past? – tenure, roles and attitudes in the central civil service.

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Abstract

In this paper we describe the changes that have taken place in the Norwegian civil service over the past 30 years, spanning the period of the ‘old public administration’, the New Public Management era and finally the current post-NPM period. We focus on demographic changes and on changes in tenure, tasks, attitudes and contact patterns. The changes in civil servants’ tasks, attitudes and contacts are analysed using generational, career and demographic perspectives. The empirical data base is provided by surveys conducted every ten years of civil servants in the ministries. The main empirical findings are that there has been a combination of robustness and change in the Norwegian civil service over the past 30 years. We find little support for the generational perspective. The career perspective, illustrated by the importance of position, is best fitted to understand the variations in civil servants’ contact patterns and attitudes. Demography, as represented by different educational backgrounds and genders, also has an effect.

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Introduction

Over the past two or three decades the central civil service in many countries has experienced much change and turbulence. Three different phases of development are discernible – the “old Weberian public administration”, the NPM era and, more recently, what has come to be labelled the post-NPM phase (Christensen, Lie and Lægreid 2007). Some see these as phases of dominance, whereby each new reform wave pushes aside the main features of the former generation and installs its own administrative principles. Another view, and the one we address here, is that each phase involves a rebalancing of existing and new features, so that previous features continue to exist; but sometimes in new forms (Light 1998, Pierson 2004, Streeck and Thelen 2005). The result is an increase in the complexity of administrative structures and culture. When studying the history of the civil service it therefore seems appropriate to take an “archaeological” approach (Lægreid et al. 2003).

In this paper we will first describe the changes in the Norwegian civil service over the past 30 years, spanning the three development phases mentioned, by focusing on demographic changes and on changes in tenure, tasks, attitudes and contact patterns. Second, we will analyse variations in civil servants’ tasks, attitudes and contacts in 2006.¹ The tenure of civil servants seems to be a potentially important variable to focus on in this respect. People who have spent many years in the civil service are the carriers of the history of civil service institutions – functioning as their living memory – and will hence pass on the history and cultural norms and values of the institution to coming generations (March and Olsen 1989, Selznick 1957). They are important for the “regeneration” aspect and for the ideal that turn-over will be gradual enough to allow older civil servants to socialize and train younger ones (Pfeffer 1983). But civil servants with long tenure are important for other reasons, too, since they are naturally overrepresented among administrative leaders. They bring to leadership positions experience and attitudes formed over a long period of time and informed by a mixture of tradition and change.

A crucial question addressed in this paper is whether civil servants with long tenure in the central public administration are living in the past. Are their tasks more related to the “old public administration” – in other words, tasks related to laws, rules, single cases, etc.

¹ The main reason for analysing only the variations in the 2006 data is that the earlier surveys are more difficult to use as an illustration of the division of the three periods.

– than those of civil servants with a shorter tenure whose tasks will be more ‘modern’ and NPM-oriented and include things like planning and policy development, organizational development, regulation, performance measurement or else the more coordinative tasks associated with the post-NPM phase. Are their attitudes to their roles and identity more ‘old-fashioned’? And do they have a broader and different contact pattern to civil servants with shorter tenure? Is the significance of tenure stronger in these respects than other independent variables like position, gender or education? These questions will be addressed by using three theoretical approaches – a generational perspective, a cumulative career perspective and a demographic perspective.

The data used to analyse the main research questions are primarily from a large survey conducted of civil servants in the Norwegian ministries in 2006, but comparable surveys from 1976, 1986 and 1996 are also used to show developmental features of the Norwegian central civil service.²

We will first give a brief outline of the Norwegian context. Then we will introduce the three theoretical perspectives and apply them to the survey data. Third, we will describe the changes in demographic composition and tenure over time, followed by a description of the changes in tasks, attitudes and contact patterns. Fourth, we will analyse the variation in tasks, attitudes and contact patterns by examining the importance of tenure and of structural and demographic features. Finally, we will draw some general conclusions.

The Norwegian context - historical development and reform waves.

The Norwegian constitution dates from 1814, the year that ended 400 years of subordination to Denmark and marked its entry into a union with Sweden that lasted until 1905. The central civil service established after 1814 had strong hierarchical and centralized features (Christensen 2003). The most important aspect of the centralized state was the establishment of seven ministries dominated by jurists, a situation that lasted right up until the 1970s. In the years following 1814 various professional groups became rather sceptical towards the centralized state model and demanded professional autonomy. As a result, between 1840 and 1880 a number of specialized, sectoral agencies dominated by

² The respondents were all civil servants in the ministries from executive officers to top civil servants. The response rate was 67 percent in 2006 compared with 72 percent in 1976, 1986 and 1996.

different professional groups were established (Christensen and Roness 1999). These agencies were based on the Swedish model, but were later modified to become semi-autonomous bodies, a model still dominant today.

From an early stage the centralized state model in Norway was based very much on Rechtsstaat values. It displayed Weberian features and the majority of civil servants and politicians were jurists (Christensen 2003). Over time this state model acquired cultural features related to nation-building and designed to integrate different groups culturally and to develop collective norms and values (Slagstad 1998). This process of cultural integration aimed both to reconcile geographically-based cultural differences but eventually also to integrate the growing working class (Rokkan and Valen 1970). After World War II another integrative process started whose aim was to bring about systematic organizational participation in government (Olsen 1983). Interest groups were increasingly formally integrated into public decision-making processes via various organizational forms. They were seen as special interests but also as participating in a collective effort to build the welfare state. They represented strong pressure for equality as a central value and norm in various policy areas, such as wage equality.

Summing up the historical development, the 'old public administration' or civil service, built on centralization, educational homogeneity of civil servants, cultural integration and corporatist features, was really established during the Labour Party's term in office from 1946 until 1965, when for most of that time it formed majority and single-party governments, labelled the 'one-party state'. This form of public administration remained very strong in the 1970s but was modified somewhat by decentralizing elements.

During the 1980s Norway experienced a period of turbulent transition. There was a marked but not very strong move to the right, partly supported by a modernized and increasingly right-leaning Labour Party, and this gradually changed administrative policy (Christensen and Læg Reid 1998b). Nevertheless, when NPM was introduced Norway did not jump on the band-wagon but remained a reluctant reformer for the next 10-15 years (Olsen 1996). In 1986 the Center-Right government introduced a modernization program, and the next year the Labour Party proposed a renewal program for the civil service. Both programs were inspired by NPM, but reflected primarily NPM rhetoric and did not result in much action. Starting in the 1990s the corporative system became weaker and Norway gradually introduced some NPM features. Management by Objectives and Results was

introduced in all government organizations, followed by the gradual structural devolution of state-owned enterprises and agencies. The most marked NPM-oriented period was during the Conservative-Centre government's term in office from 2001 to 2005, when a regulatory reform was implemented and increasing use was made of efficiency-related measures. The Red-Green government that came to power in 2005 was elected on an anti-NPM ticket, but it has been slow to reverse or modify NPM measures (Christensen and Lie 2007).

If we relate our surveys to the NPM and post-NPM reforms, we can assume that at the time the 1986 survey was conducted the old public administration was still in place.³ The survey of 1996 seems to show the first NPM features (Christensen and Læg Reid 1998a), while the 2006 survey shows the tension between NPM and post-NPM reform measures. The 2006 survey reflects both the general experience of the post-NPM phase and also the major reorganizations that were taking place at the time designed to increase control and horizontal coordination, like the new labour and welfare reform (Christensen, Fimreite and Læg Reid 2007).

Generational, career and demographic perspectives.

Broadly speaking, tenure as a demographic variable concerns certain aspects of employment in formal organizations (Pfeffer 1983, Tsui et al. 1995, 1999). Tenure is different from other demographic variables, which concern social background, and focuses primarily on the experience and career paths of civil servants. Tenure reflects the dynamic between civil servants' background and the structural and cultural constraints to which they are subjected inside the civil service; the longer the tenure, the more complex this dynamic is.

When used as a variable to analyse the development and working of the central civil service tenure may be defined in different ways. First, tenure may be seen in a *generational perspective*. When people enter the civil service, they do so in a certain historical context. This embraces a number of factors, one of which is education. Civil servants educated during the student revolution of the late 1960s, for example, will have a different background and attitudes to those educated during the educational reforms of the 1990s. Another factor is the political, societal, economic and technological constraints

³ The division between the periods is reflected in the way the tenure variable is constructed, as shown below.

prevailing at the time they entered the civil service, but also the current political-administrative structure and culture, including whether the civil service is going through a period of turbulence or not. At any given moment central government institutions are a shifting residue of history, and it is important to take lags in adjustment into account (Stinchcombe 1965, March and Olsen 1989). The theory of path-dependency would expect civil servants' attitudes and behaviour further on in their careers to be influenced by the historical context of their formative years, i. e. their cultural "roots" will influence the "paths" taken later (Krasner 1988, Selznick 1957, Pierson 2004).

In accordance with this analytical view one would expect there to be distinct generations of civil servants in different development phases, and tenure would hence explain variations in attitudes, role enactment, identities, contacts, etc. But such a view makes certain assumptions that may not or may not be valid. One is that each period, in spite of overlapping reforms, really is quite distinct and thus leaves its own specific generational mark on civil servants. This assumes that most of the contextual constraints point in one direction and do not show an inconsistent pattern. It also assumes that path-dependency plays a dominant role over other factors, like hierarchical position, education or gender, and is the key factor in shaping civil servants' attitudes, identities and contact patterns.

One challenge of using such a perspective, therefore, is to delimit and define the different generations of civil servants and their historical roots, and to identify the effects and implications these have. Ideally, one would be able to do this using a wider range of contextual factors in clearly defined generations, but a simpler solution is to define them according to the main features of the civil service and its reforms, as indicated. The generation exposed to the 'old public administration' will thus in many countries be those people who started their careers in the period up to the early 1980s. The New Public Management generation is the one that started their careers from the late 1980s, while 'post-NPM' covers the period from the early 2000s. There will, of course, be variations in the timing of NPM and post-NPM in many countries and we will later put the Norwegian context in perspective in this respect.

The generational perspective stresses that civil servants in many respects will be 'stuck in their generation', meaning that the experience of their formative years will be far more important for their later attitudes and identities than what they experience later in

their career. This perspective focuses on the importance of timing and temporal sequences, placing the bureaucrats in different social contexts that will affect their later attitudes and behaviour (Pierson 2004, Orren and Skowronek 1994).

A second perspective is a *cumulative career* one. In contrast to the first perspective, which looks at external societal factors, this perspective focuses on the importance of internal socialization and discipline (Lægreid and Olsen 1978, 1984). Socialization encompasses attitude formation and the process whereby civil servants internalize the prevailing values in the ministries, while discipline is more preoccupied with behavioural control through promotion mechanisms. Norwegian civil servants reach the top of the administrative hierarchy in the ministries after going through several socialization and disciplinary filters designed to produce a responsible bureaucracy (Lægreid and Olsen 1978). Civil servants generally start their careers as executive officers dealing with single cases and performing simple tasks. Later they move on to more general work and are gradually promoted to leadership positions, where they come into contact with a wider variety of actors, etc.

Unlike the generational perspective, this perspective stresses that civil servants accumulate experience in the course of their careers and that their experience will reflect the stage they are currently at. This perspective combines tenure and position. In line with the effects of vertical structural differentiation, those in positions higher up the hierarchy will have more general tasks, pay more attention to political signals, have a more holistic identity and broader contacts. In addition the classical bureaucrat will act in a manner appropriate to his or her position rather than in accordance with personal preferences and can be trusted to do so, even in the face of considerable temptation to act differently (March and Olsen 1989, Lægreid and Olsen 1978). Civil servants with long tenure and in top positions have normally made a career within the civil service.

Tenure, according to this perspective, will produce different expectations to those connected with the generational perspective. As civil servants move through a system based on a career structure, their experience, for example of reforms, will be more cumulative and blended and will not yield such distinct categories of identity as those associated with particular generations of reforms and historical periods. What would be the general effects of tenure according to such a perspective? We would expect long tenure to be connected with having general tasks, attending more to political signals, identifying

with the civil service as a whole and establishing a broad range of long-term contacts. This will apply to people in top positions, especially those with a long career. Simon's (1957) main argument, according to the theory of bounded rationality, is that where a civil servant is located structurally will have an importance influence on his or her behaviour, because formal structure channels attention and capacity. Leaders will therefore have a different structural outlook, different attitudes and contacts, and will behave differently to actors lower down in the hierarchy.

In most respects the two variables in the career perspective, tenure and position, will yield similar predictions, based on the premise that most civil servants with long tenure will probably also be in leadership positions. But civil servants with long tenure may also have more professionally related jobs, remaining in advisory positions, for example, rather than becoming leaders, i.e. in other words promotion is a selective process. This may weaken the effects of position. Tenure is also a more complex factor than position, and has elements that may point in different directions, producing a less clear profile.

A third perspective, and an alternative one to the first two, is a *demographic* perspective (Lægreid and Olsen 1978, Pfeffer 1983). Instead of stressing generational effects or career effects, this perspective deemphasizes tenure and focuses more on how individually oriented demographic variables, either separately or in combination, have more significance than tenure and position for attitudes, identity and contacts. This perspective holds that type of higher education is more important for differentiating tasks, signals, roles, identities and contacts than tenure, as is gender.

One basis for such an individual perspective is that the personal background of civil servants will influence their modes of thought and behaviour in the civil service. Through early socialization based on gender and education a civil servant arrives in a government institution with certain 'baggage' that affects his or her subsequent attitudes and behaviour. The theory of representative bureaucracy presupposes that social background, whether based on prescribed features (gender) or acquired features (educational background), will be important for attitudes and action (Lægreid and Olsen 1978, Meier 1973). According to this perspective, where you come from will be more significant than where you are located in the formal civil service structure or what cohort or generation of civil servants you belong to.

Studies of cohorts are related to all three of the above perspectives in different ways (Pfeffer 1983). They stress that the civil service recruits groups of civil servants at certain points in time and that each cohort acquired the same experience when passing through generations of reforms and entering different stages of their careers. The cohorts are, however, of different sizes and different complexity, which may influence how much effect they have on attitudes, identities and contacts. We will not analyse the data from such a complex cohort angle, i.e. combining a generational perspective and a more individual perspective into a contextual analysis. It will, however, be relevant to understand the dynamic between the perspectives. We believe each of these perspectives captures some aspects of the role, attitudes and behaviour of civil servants. Their perceptions, attitudes and behaviour emerge from rather complex socially embedded intra- and inter-organizational processes that cannot easily or adequately be captured by the concepts of total autonomy or total subordination, but must instead be seen as a complex interaction between generational features, career and internal factors and demographic variables.

Expectations. Table 1 shows some broad expectations we have about the correlation between tenure and the dependent variables, based on the different perspectives. The generational and career perspectives focus on tenure as a primary factor, while the individual one may tend to see tenure as one of many significant variables. Based on the data below on single cases as a main task, we would expect, from a generational perspective, that administrative leaders with long tenure would score higher on single cases, while civil servants with short tenure would have more general tasks related to planning, policy development and coordination, because these kinds of tasks were the ones that became dominant or ‘modern’ during their formative years, whereas those with longer tenure entered the civil service at a time when single tasks were the norm. The career perspective produces quite the opposite expectation – civil servants with long tenure will have more general tasks, because they will have normally moved up the hierarchy, while those with shorter tenure will focus more on single cases because they are still at the beginning of their careers.

Table 1. Expectations based on generational, career and demographic perspectives.

	<i>Generational perspective</i>	<i>Career perspective</i>	<i>Demographic perspective</i>
Tasks	More single cases for people with long tenure. More general tasks for short tenure	More general tasks for long tenure. More single cases for short tenure. More general tasks for leaders	Type of education matters: More single cases for jurists. More general tasks for economists and social scientists. Women have more general tasks
Rules	Rules more significant for long tenure	Rules less significant for long tenure. Leaders less rule-driven	Jurists most affected by rules. Women less influenced by rules
Identities	Stronger identification with ministry for long tenure. Mixed profile for short tenure, more identification with own unit	More identification with civil service as a whole for long tenure. Mixed profile for short tenure, more identification with own unit. More identification with civil service as a whole and own ministry for leaders	Social scientists identify more with civil service as a whole. Economists and jurists identify more with own unit. Women identify more with civil service as a whole
Signals	More political signals for long tenure. More professional considerations for short tenure	More political signals for long tenure. Less distinct profile for short tenure. More political signals for leaders	More professional considerations for economists. More political signals for political scientists. More political signals for women
Contacts	More contact with political and administrative leadership with long tenure. More contact with interest organizations with long tenure	Both broader contacts and more frequent contacts with political and administrative leadership for long tenure. Leaders have the broadest and most frequent contacts	Social scientists have the broadest contacts, jurists the narrowest. Economists have the most contacts with the political leadership. Men have the broadest and most frequent contacts
Reform-orientation	Long tenure scores low on NPM and post-NPM Medium tenure scores high on NPM Short tenure scores highest on post-NPM	Those with long tenure and high structural position score high on both NPM and post-NPM	Jurists score low on NPM-orientation. Social scientists score high on NPM and post-NPM-orientation. Economists score high on NPM. Women score higher than men on NPM and lower on post-NPM

Whether civil servants have clear rules directing their work or a lot of discretion may be related to both the generational and the career perspective. The expectation in a generational perspective would be that those with long tenure will score high on rules directing their work, since the old public administration was more rule-oriented, while those with short tenure will be more influenced by the greater goal-orientation and autonomy associated with modern reforms, and will probably therefore have more discretion. The opposite expectation could be formulated from a career perspective, since

those with long tenure will tend to be further up the hierarchy and hence less subject to formal constraints and in leading positions where there are either competing formal rules or generally more discretion.

Concerning political signals, from both perspectives one would expect long tenure to be related to attending more to political signals, but for different reasons. According to the generational perspective this relationship might occur because of the generally greater emphasis on hierarchy in the 'old public administration', while a career perspective might explain this in terms of the greater political sensitivity acquired through leadership experience. The perspectives may differ concerning those with short tenure, because a generational perspective would predict that professional considerations would have become more important during the last decade than they were thirty years ago, partly because of increased autonomy, while the career perspective would have greater difficulty formulating a clear profile.

Identities may differ according to the two perspectives. In the generational perspective identification with the ministry would have been more common under the 'old public administration'. In a career perspective long tenure would imply the accumulation of a lot of experience, leading to stronger identification with the civil service as a whole. For short tenure, both perspectives would probably predict more identification with own unit, since the last decade has been more marked by the decentralizing elements of NPM, but post-NPM factors may also be relevant here, making the profile more mixed.

We would expect contact patterns to differ according to the two perspectives. A generational perspective would associate long tenure with greater contact with the political and administrative leadership, since the hierarchy in the ministry was less rigid and the leadership structure more open 20 years ago. We would also predict more contact with interest groups, because such contact was more frequent three decades ago. In a career perspective long tenure would mean the accumulation of a broad set of contacts and more frequent contacts with the political and administrative leadership – the latter both because civil servants with long tenure would include more leaders and because the more hierarchical leadership structure would produce greater differentiation between actors.

We focus on two variables concerning NPM and post-NPM, respectively. The NPM indicator is whether the civil servant attributes much importance or relevance to performance reporting and evaluation, while the post-NPM indicator focuses on the quality

of coordination between own policy field and government bodies in other fields. Based on a generational perspective, we would expect people with long tenure, meaning those who started their careers in the late 1980s or earlier, to score low both on an NPM- and a post-NPM-orientation. The career perspective, on the other hand, would expect civil servants with long tenure and in leadership positions to score high on both an NPM- and a post-NPM-orientation, because they have been obliged to handle the various measures and have the experience to do so.

From a demographic perspective, we would expect jurists to score low on NPM and social scientists to score high both on an NPM- and a post-NPM-orientation and economists to score high on NPM measures. Our analysis of the 1996 survey showed that women overall scored higher on NPM measures than men, except for the most radical measures, i.e. they were modified modernizers (Christensen and Lægneid 1998a). Accordingly, we would expect women to score higher on NPM-orientation here, because performance reporting is part of Management by Objectives and Results, a measure seen as a more moderate feature of NPM. We would expect men to score higher on post-NPM coordinative measures, because they are more strongly represented in the administrative leadership.

Structural position – whether civil servants are in leadership positions or not is generally assumed to matter. We would expect leaders to have more general tasks, because a high position in the hierarchy is related to more general and coordinative responsibility. They will be less rule-driven than executive officers, attend more to political signals, identify more with the civil service as a whole and with their own ministry, have the broadest and most frequent contacts with a wide range of actors, and attend more to both NPM and post-NPM measures.

When Lægneid and Olsen (1978) did their study of factors explaining the attitudes, experience and contacts of civil servants in Norway, using survey data from 1976, they applied two analytical models. One was the ‘responsible bureaucracy’, which attended to structural variables (like position); the other was the ‘representative bureaucracy’, which focused on individual demographic variables, including social background variables, like education and gender. The main empirical finding was that structural variables had stronger explanatory power than demographic ones. Among the structural ones, position in the hierarchy was overall the most important, while type of education was the most

significant demographic variable. Our analysis of the 1996 survey, which focused on NPM-related measures in the civil service, in many ways confirms this main picture (Christensen and Lægheid 1998a).

Our demographic perspective, which is posited as an alternative to the tenure-related perspectives, focuses on gender and education. Type of education is assumed to have a differentiating effect, so that jurists are expected to work more on single cases, be more rule-driven, and identify more with their own unit, while social scientists are more likely to be generalists concerning tasks, have an education-based affinity to political signals, have a more holistic identification and have the broadest contacts. Economists are expected to have more general tasks, be more affected by professional considerations and identify more with their own unit, since they are more NPM-oriented (Christensen and Lægheid 1998a), and have most contact with the political leadership (Lægheid and Olsen (1978).

It is more difficult to make predictions about gender. Lægheid and Olsen (1978) found relatively few effects of gender in their study, but they predicted that an increase in the proportion of women in the civil service would make gender a more significant variable, which has turned out to be correct. In their study of NPM in the civil service, Christensen and Lægheid (1998a) found some influence of gender. They discovered, for example, that women were more likely to be modernizers than men, who were more politically loyal and professionally oriented, but women were modified modernizers while men attended more to market-type reforms. Analyses of the 2006 survey confirm that women take a more negative attitude to market instruments (Christensen and Lægheid 2007a). An analysis of those data, but with a focus on coordination, show that women experience horizontal coordination and societal coordination more positively than men, which might be related to the fact that they are less represented in leadership positions and have less hierarchy-oriented attitudes (Christensen and Lægheid 2007b).

In this study we would expect women to have more general tasks and to be less influenced by rules, because of their being recruited to the civil service later and having shorter tenure. We would also expect them to be more oriented towards political signals and to identify more with the civil service as a whole because of their more general positive orientation towards and greater trust in government (Christensen and Lægheid 2005). We would also expect women to have narrower and less frequent contacts with

other actors than men because they are less integrated in the civil service, but overall to be more positive about most NPM measures.

The independent variables: changes in the civil service 1976-2006.⁴

Tenure. Traditionally the trend in Norway has been for civil servants to have life-long careers in the ministries, often the same ministry. Over time it seems to have become more common to change one's job more frequently, primarily inside the ministerial or agency structure, but in some cases moving to the private sector, at least for some groups. This has reduced the average tenure somewhat. A natural generational change occurred in the mid-1970s and 1980s, because jurists who entered the ministries after World War II retired; making way for people with different educational backgrounds.

Table 2 shows considerable stability in the average tenure in the ministries in the period 1976–2006, perhaps indicating a rather successful 'regeneration' process. The reduction in average tenure between 1976 and 1986 is related, as mentioned, to a rather large generational turn-over in that period. There is some variation between the ministries concerning tenure, but this decreases over time.

Table 2. Tenure, formal position, education and gender composition in Norwegian ministries. 1976–2006. Percentage.

	1976	1986	1996	2006
Average tenure in the ministries (years)	13	11	10	11
<i>Position:</i>				
Top leaders	10	8	5	5
Mid-level	37	39	45	51
Executive officers	52	53	50	44
<i>Education:</i>				
Jurists	38	27	22	22
Economists	18	18	18	16
Social scientists	4	13	18	24
<i>Gender:</i>				
Women	15	26	43	48
N (average)	(784)	(1183)	(1426)	(1677)

Hierarchical position. The hierarchy in the Norwegian ministries has changed over time in a number of ways. The proportion of leadership positions has decreased, while the proportion of advisory positions has increased, reflecting changes in the way the work is

⁴ The trends described in this section are mainly based on analyses made by Langhoff (2007).

organized, with an increase in the number of projects, collegial structures and team-work.⁵ Among the leaders in the hierarchy, relatively fewer are top leaders than before and relatively more are mid-level leaders (the greatest increase being at the top of this group), as shown in Table 2. This reflects both an increase in the number of coordinative tasks and attempts to shield top leaders from increasing pressure and capacity problems. This means that the executive officers at the bottom of the hierarchy have less formal access to top leaders than 30 years ago. Variations in the shape of the hierarchy between ministries seem to decrease over time, but the new profile seems to be slightly more common for the typically coordinative ministries and less so for the sectoral ministries. There is a significant positive correlation between long tenure and holding a leading position, as we would expect from a career perspective.⁶

Educational background. Historically, the educational background of civil servants in the Norwegian ministries has predominantly been law school. The first challenge to this dominance came in the 1950s with the influx of economists to meet the increasing need for planning competence. Since then, the proportion of economists in the ministries has not increased much further (by slightly less than 10%), but in several important ministries, particularly the Ministry of Finance, they have risen to occupy central leadership positions. Social scientists started to enter the ministries in the 1970s and since then their share has increased from 4% in 1976 to 24% in 2006, as shown in Table 2, making them the largest educational group in the ministries. The growth of this group, which is dominated by political scientists, has come about as a response to the demand for more expertise on planning and policy development, and probably coordination as well, but as far as its tasks are concerned this group is rather flexible and does not perform a distinctive set of tasks, reflecting a trend towards less professionalisation. In the 1980s and particularly in the 1990s the kind of expertise required by NPM led to the employment of business economists by the ministries. Since then, however, their share (around 7-8%) has not increased, even though more NPM measures have been introduced. As for the jurists, their share has diminished over the last 30 years from 38% in 1976 to 22% in 1996, but since then it has been stable, probably reflecting an increased demand for legal expertise related to adaptation to the EU and the EEA-treaty. The overall rather large change in the

⁵ Advisors are a rather heterogeneous group, with a wide range of wages and tasks, often rather loosely coupled to the line organization.

⁶ In 2006 the correlation between tenure and position was .30 (sign=.000, Pearson R).

educational composition of the ministries makes them more heterogeneous, with less dominance of groups with a particular educational background.

Gender. The historical trend in Norway has been a rather sharp increase in the number of women in the workforce, including in the public sector, since the share of women obtaining higher education has also increased quite a lot. Table 2 shows clearly that the share of women in the Norwegian ministries has increased sharply in the 30-year period studied, from 15% to 48%, indicating a feminization of the civil service (Lægreid 1995). What is interesting is that the increase has been much lower over the last decade, which seems rather surprising given that the share of women in higher education has increased even further during this period.

If we look at the relationship between gender and hierarchical position, we find that the increase in the share of women has been highest among executive officers at the bottom of the organization – 40% between 1976 and 2006 – while the comparable increase for mid-level leaders and top leaders has been 28% and 20%, respectively. This has to do with when the larger cohorts of women were recruited and the number of years it takes to reach the leadership level. The increase of the share of women among executive officers between 1996 and 2006 was only 3%, however, while the comparative increase for mid-level positions and top leaders, respectively, was 8% and 5%, so the representation of women is ‘maturing’.

Describing the dependent variables: tasks, attitudes and contact.

Tasks. What kind of main function or task a civil servant has reflects what kind of functions his or her ministry focuses on, even though some functions are similar across ministries. Long-term changes in the main function also reflect changes in the function of ministries in the political-administrative system. The main trend in this respect is for ministries to become more like secretariats for the political executive leadership, attending more to planning and coordinative functions and later to controlling agencies, while single cases are deemphasized (Christensen and Lægreid 1998b).

Table 3 shows quite clearly that the main functions of civil servants have changed quite a lot in the 30-year period studied. The most dramatic change has been the sharp fall in the number of civil servants working on single cases, which very much reflects the intentional change in profile mentioned. Accordingly, there has also been a corresponding

marked increase in the share of civil servants involved in legislation, planning/policy development and coordination. This development reflects both NPM and post-NPM features but regarding law-related tasks also increased integration into EU through the EEA agreement. While NPM produced more frame-steering and more planning and policy development, it also resulted in more structural fragmentation, which increased the need for coordination – a typical post-NPM feature. Again, variation among the ministries concerning their main function is rather high, but as in the case of tenure, it diminished during the period 1976–2006.

Table 3. Main task of civil servants. 1976–2006. Percentage.

	1976	1986	1996	2006
Law-related	10	10	15	16
Single cases	28	22	13	7
Planning/policy development	20	22	28	29
Coordination	8	13	16	19
Other functions (budget, ICT, personnel, control, information etc.)	34	33	28	30
(N=100%)	(722)	(1105)	(1312)	(1832)

Rules and discretion. Here the question is whether civil servants have unambiguous rules and established practice as a basis for their daily work, or whether discretionary behaviour is more typical. One of the main elements of NPM was to change the administrative culture from a rule-based bureaucratic mode towards a more performance- and result-oriented mode with greater discretion for managers and civil servants in general. With the increase in central control and coordination associated with the post-NPM reforms one expectation might be the reintroduction of stricter rules and less managerial freedom, in contrast to the management-orientation of NPM.

Table 4. Rules/established practice or discretion in the task enactment of civil servants. 1976–2006. Percentage.

	1976	1986	1996	2006
Unambiguous rules	34	31	36	40
Both rule orientation and discretion	33	34	34	31
Large discretion/leeway	33	34	30	29
N=100%	(776)	(1176)	(1464)	(1854)

Table 4 primarily shows great stability in this respect. First, there is no significant increase in managerial discretion and leeway or a reduction in rule-based administration from the

1970s and 1980s to the 1990s, in spite of the NPM movement and its focus on a cultural change of this kind. More autonomy seems to be followed by more rules and regulation, i.e. deregulation and re-regulation seem to go in tandem (Christensen and Læg Reid 2006). And leaders are not less rule-oriented than non-leaders. Second, there is no significant change from 1996 to 2006 in the balance between rule-orientation and managerial autonomy, in other words there is no indication of a major shift in a post-NPM direction, mainly because the NPM movement had such a weak general impact on rule-orientation in the first place in the mid-1990s. The general picture is that the civil servants can be divided into three relatively stable groups of fairly equal size: 1/3 rule-oriented, 1/3 having managerial autonomy and 1/3 in the middle. In a long-term perspective there is a weak trend towards increased rule orientation, in contrast to what would be expected from the NPM movement.

Role orientation. We also describe how much weight civil servants attach to various considerations in their daily work, i.e. we examine the balance between different elements and decision-making premises in their role enactment. Table 5 shows clearly that political loyalty, expressed through attention to political signals, but also knowledge-based and professional considerations, are very important. The relative importance of these main considerations is high and has remained stable over the last two decades. Table 5 shows clearly the importance and robustness of these two classic bureaucratic elements, political loyalty and professional considerations⁷.

Table 5. Strong or very strong importance allotted to different role considerations among civil servants in Norwegian ministries. 1986-2006. Percent.

<i>Role considerations:</i>	1986	1996	2006
Knowledge-based and professional considerations	89	91	95
Signals from political leadership	88	89	89

Identity. Table 6 shows that civil servants' identification with their own department is high and has remained stable. Identification with their own ministry is also strong and has increased over the past ten years. This pattern illustrates the importance of the Norwegian position-based civil service system in which recruitment is decentralized to each individual ministry or agency and not carried out by a senior executive service or central recruitment body (Læg Reid and Wise 2007). Identification with central government

⁷ Such a question was not included in the survey in 1976.

as a whole is lower, but has increased substantially over the past decade, indicating the emergence of post-NPM features.

Table 6 Strong or very strong identity with own department, own ministry or central government in general. 1996–2006. Percentage.

	1996	2006
Identification with own department ⁸	85	84
Identification with own ministry	73	80
Identification with central government in general	34	51
N (average)	1439	1668

Contact patterns. Table 7 reveals that internal contact with administrative leaders in own ministry is high and stable. Contact with political executives in own ministry is much lower and in fact decreased somewhat in the 1990s and later compared with the 1970s and 1980s, reflecting capacity problems among the political executives. Contact with interest organizations has decreased significantly since the 1970s, which was the peak of the Norwegian corporative system (Christiansen and Rommetvedt 1999). In line with the weakening of the corporative system in Norway we also see less frequent contacts between civil servants in the ministries and interest organizations in business, trade and industry and with civil servants' unions.⁹

Table 7 Monthly or more frequent contact with own minister, administrative top leaders in own ministry and interest groups. 1976-2006. Percentage.

	1976	1986	1996	2006
Contact with own minister	42	45	33	34
Contact with administrative top leaders in own ministry		87	77	83
Contact with interest organizations in business, trade and industry	(43)	28	19	16
Contact with civil service unions		26	19	15
N (average)	770	1164	1457	1804

Reform orientation. Our indicator for NPM-oriented reforms is performance reporting and evaluation. Management by Objectives and Results is a core NPM instrument in Norway, and performance reporting is a main component of this performance

⁸ In Scandinavia, unlike some Anglo-Saxon countries, every central administrative unit on the highest level is labeled a ministry, rather than both ministry and (line) department. Department in Norway means the basic large units that a ministry consists of and these are subdivided into divisions or sections.

⁹ The percentage for 1976 is not directly comparable with the later years because no distinction was made between civil servant unions and other interest organizations within industry, trade and business

management system (Lægreid, Roness and Rubecksen 2006). In 1996 almost half of the civil servants said that performance reporting and evaluation were important or very important or relevant in their own field of work. Ten years later the percentage had dropped to 38 (Table 8), indicating that NPM has peaked.

Table 8 Attitudes towards NPM and post NPM reform measures. 2006. Percentage

	1996	2006
Performance reporting and evaluation important or very important or relevant	46	38
Coordination between own field and government bodies in other policy areas is good or very good	-	45
N(average)	1334	1396

Not relevant is excluded. -: Question not posted in 1996.

While the performance management system is mainly preoccupied with vertical control and coordination within own policy area or sector, post-NPM reforms are more concerned about horizontal coordination problems across sector specialization in central government. In 2006 fewer than half of the civil servants in the ministries reported that horizontal coordination was good. Horizontal coordination was seen as much more problematic than vertical coordination within own policy area, indicating that concern about re-establishing whole-of-government, which is a feature of post-NPM reforms, was rather strong (Christensen and Lægreid 2007b).

The significance of tenure on tasks, attitudes and contacts.

This section focuses on how the different independent variables, i.e. our indicators of generational, cumulative career and democratic perspectives, correlate with tasks, attitudes and contact patterns. We first address the generational perspective by focusing on the bivariate relations between tenure and the dependent variables.

Table 9 reveals some significant effects of tenure. First, there is a significant effect on tasks. Civil servants with short tenure spend less time on coordination than employees with long tenure. Second, we see a significant effect on political signals. Civil servants with short tenure tend to pay less attention to signals from political executives than those with longer tenure.

Third, there is an effect on identification, meaning that civil servants with long tenure tend to identify more strongly with their own ministry or central government in general than employees with short tenure. Fourth, there is also an effect on contact patterns. People with long tenure tend to have more frequent contact with administrative leaders in their own ministry, with political executives and also with interest organizations. Finally, tenure also affects reform-orientation. People with long tenure tend to be more satisfied with cross-sectoral coordination, less concerned with post-NPM problems and more preoccupied with performance reporting than civil servants with short tenure.

Table 9. Tenure in central government by tasks, rule-orientation, signals, identification, contact pattern and reform orientation. Percentage. 2006.

	Tenure			Pearson R
	Under 5 years	5-15 years	Over 15 years	
<i>Tasks:</i>				
Single cases	23	15	20	.03
Coordination	36	49	49	-.12**
Rule-oriented	42	39	40	.03
<i>Signals:</i>				
From political executives	65	76	77	-.06*
Professional considerations	60	64	64	.03
<i>Identification:</i>				
Own department	85	85	84	.01
Own ministry	77	80	84	-.11**
Central government in general	41	53	62	-.14**
<i>Contact:</i>				
Own minister	79	86	84	-.09**
Administrative leadership in own ministry	25	36	42	-.13**
Interest organizations in business, trade and industry	13	19	15	-.07*
<i>Reform-orientation</i>				
Performance reporting, evaluation	36	38	42	-.06*
Horizontal coordination	39	45	46	-.10**
N (average)	423	650	402	

Tasks: Percentage spending most of their time on single cases or coordination;

Rules: Percentage with very clear/clear rules/practice;

Signals: Percentage reporting that signals are important or very important;

Identification: Percentage reporting strong or very strong identification;

Contact: Percentage with contact once a month or more often;

Performance reporting, evaluation: Percentage saying that this tool is important or very important;

Horizontal coordination: Percentage reporting the horizontal coordination is good or very good.

That said, tenure does not seem to affect the amount of time civil servants spend working on single cases, whether their daily work is strongly rule-constrained or not, the extent that they identify with their own department or the importance of professional considerations in their daily work. Still, the main result here is that tenure matters.

Multivariate analysis: The relative explanatory power of tenure, position and demography.

We now turn to the question of the relative explanatory power of the different independent variables. A central question is whether the effect of tenure is sustained when we control for cumulative career aspects, such as position, or demographic features, like gender and education.

When controlling for structural and democratic features, we first see that the effect of tenure generally tends to be weakened (Tables 10 and 11), a result that tallies closely with earlier analyses of this type of civil service survey (Læg Reid and Olsen 1978, Christensen and Læg Reid 1998a). This is especially the case for contact patterns, which indicates clearly that this is the set of dependent variables most directly related to leadership and the one that varies among different hierarchical levels, all the more so when there are fewer leaders at the top, as shown in Table 2. Tenure has no significant effect on contact with political or administrative executives or with interest organizations after controlling for position, gender and education, which is somewhat surprising, at least from a career perspective point of view. One would have thought that those with long tenure would have accumulated quite a variety of good contacts, regardless of whether they end up in a leadership position.

Second, there are still some significant effects of tenure related to having coordination tasks, identity with own ministry or central government in general, reform orientation towards post-NPM challenges, and the importance of signals from political executives. This seems to indicate a career effect, i.e. the more experienced people are, the more general tasks they have, the less concerned they are with horizontal coordination problems, the broader their identity and the more political sensitivity they have because of learning effects.

Table 10. Summary of regression equations by tenure, position and demographic features affecting tasks, rule orientation and identities. Standardized Beta coefficients. Linear regression. 2006.

	Tasks		Rule-orientation	Identification		
	Single cases	Coordination		Own department	Own ministry	Central government
<i>Tenure</i>	-.01	-.06*	.00	.05	-.06*	-.11**
<i>Position</i>	.08**	-.18**	.07**	-.11**	-.14**	-.13**
<i>Demography:</i>						
-Gender	.04	.02	-.05*	.02	.02	-.02
-Jurists	.12**	-.22**	.09**	.09**	-.02	.10**
-Social scientists	-.02	.14**	-.06*	.00	-.01	.08**
-Economists	.07*	-.05	.03	.04	-.03	.01
R	.15	.37	.15	.15	.17	.21
R2	.02	.14	.02	.02	.03	.04
Adjusted R2	.02	.13	.02	.02	.03	.04
F statistics	5.697	37.857	5.800	5.525	7.649	10.930
Sign. Of F	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	1451	1465	1480	1468	1470	1454

Table 11 Summary of regression equations by tenure, position and demographic features affecting signals, contact pattern and reform orientation. Standardized Beta coefficients. Linear regression. 2006.

	Signals		Contact			Reform-orientation	
	Political executives	Professional considerations	Minister	Top civil servants	Interest org.	Per-formance reporting	Horiz-ontal coordinaton.
<i>Tenure</i>	-.05*	.03	-.01	-0.4	-.03	-.03	-.10**
<i>Position</i>	-.10**	-.06*	-.39**	-.21**	-.10**	-.13**	-.05
<i>Demography:</i>							
-Gender	.03	-.09**	.11**	.07**	.11	-.05	-.08**
-Jurists	.24**	.15**	.05	.10**	.09	-.10**	.03
-Social scientists	.20**	.01	.12**	.14**	.04	.10**	.01
-Economists	.14**	.01	.14**	.13**	.12**	.03	.01
R	.27	.18	.45	.29	.21	.28	.14
R2	.07	.03	.21	.08	.04	.04	.02
Adjusted R2	.07	.03	.20	.08	.04	.04	.02
F Statistics	18.766	8.151	63.610	22.349	6.389	9.731	4.024
Sign of F.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.001
N	1480	1480	1486	1472	1476	1273	1181

Third, the most important factor for understanding variations in civil servants' attitudes and behaviour is position in the hierarchy. Position has a significant effect on all our dependent variables except one and is especially strong when it comes to contact with political and administrative executives and having coordinating tasks, but also when it comes to identification with one's own department, ministry and the civil service in general, as well as the importance of performance reporting. The identity effect is

interesting because it shows two things. Leaders are overall more committed to the civil service than executive officers at the grass roots, which would be expected from both a socialization and a discipline point of view, but there is not much difference in the level of identification between the two groups. This is somewhat surprising, since leaders as such are formally more obliged to think about the whole organization and structurally are in a position to do so.

Fourth, there are also significant effects of education. Jurists tend to be very involved in individual cases and less in coordination tasks, which is very much in line with the traditional profile of this group (Christensen and Roness 1999). They are more rule-oriented and identify more strongly with their own department or the central government in general. The latter seems somewhat strange, but one explanation may be that this combines an overall narrow perspective, with jurists still having a solid position in leadership roles. Jurists also tend to pay great heed to signals from political executives, but also to professional considerations. They also have close contacts with administrative executives in their own ministry and with interest organizations, the latter probably reflecting their focus on single cases. In addition, they pay less heed to performance reporting than people with other professional backgrounds.

By contrast, social scientists are more occupied with coordination and are less rule-oriented, reflecting the type of education they have received. They identify strongly with central government in general, and signals from political executives are important; probably reflecting a 'government-friendly' profile. They also have close contact with political and administrative executives and score high on the importance of performance reporting. Economists tend to work more on single cases; they pay great attention to political signals and have close contact with political and administrative executives and interest organizations. This is a more mixed profile, probably reflecting the fact that some of this group are national economists and some business economists. In these surveys it was established early on that the national economists had good contacts with the political leadership, partly because of their planning expertise and partly because they were disproportionately represented in leadership positions. The latter feature is now even stronger, while the business economists are probably the ones taking care of single cases.

Fifth, there are also some effects of gender. Women tend to be more rule-oriented, which may reflect structural position. They also pay greater attention to professional

considerations than men, which may reflect that they see such considerations as the foundation for making a career in the civil service. And they have less contact with political and administrative executives as well as with interest organizations; probably reflecting the fact that they are less represented in leadership positions than men, even though this situation is changing. Added to this, they also tend to see fewer horizontal coordination problems than men.

Discussion

How do our main results measure up to the three perspectives outlined? First, not many of the results fulfil the expectations we had based on the generational perspective, even though a few elements may do. We had expected civil servants with long tenure to score high on single cases and rule-orientation, because their formative years were in the ‘old public administration’ period, when single cases made up a greater proportion of their tasks, but we do not find such an effect, in fact we find no effect at all of tenure here. Long tenure was also expected to be coupled to performing fewer coordination tasks, because coordination has obtained a renewed attention in the central civil service over the last years. Here we actually find quite the opposite. Concerning identity, we expected identification with own ministry to be strong, because civil servants with long tenure started their career in a very sectorized system. Although there is a significant correlation between tenure and this type of identification, this effect is slightly stronger than the effect on identification with the whole ministry; a presupposed effect of the career perspective.

Tenure does correlate positively with political signals, while there is no effect on professional considerations. The correlation with political signals was expected from a generational perspective, because we assumed that exposure to political signals and contact with political leaders were stronger two to three decades ago, but here our prediction from the career perspective was the same anyway, only based on other mechanisms. Concerning professional considerations, the results are inconclusive, but they lean less towards a generational perspective than a career one, since we expected people with short tenure, whose experiences would be mainly from the last decade, to attend more to professional considerations. Concerning contacts, we expected a less pronounced profile for the generational perspective than the career one, and there are overall no significant results here.

Overall, the results for our expectations from a generational perspective were rather mixed. Either there were no significant correlations (rule-orientation and contacts), or the results were the opposite of what we expected (coordination tasks or reform orientation) or else they were mixed (identification). The only result that confirms our expectations is that those with long tenure attend more to political signals, but this does not differ much from the career perspective, so the main conclusion is that the generational perspective has rather weak explanatory power.

When we move on to the career perspective the picture is different. We expected that long tenure and high hierarchical position would lead to less focus on single cases and more on coordinative tasks and this basically accords with the main results, except for tenure and single cases. Concerning identity the results are more mixed, because the main expectation from the career perspective was that leaders and people with long tenure would score higher on identification with the civil service as a whole, while the result is that there is very little differentiation among the different measures of identity, i.e. position and tenure are important for all of them.

We expected that long tenure and high position in the hierarchy to produce more attention towards political signals, and this is indeed the case, but as mentioned above, this does not differ much from the generational perspective. We did not expect any clear results concerning professional considerations, but we find that leaders actually attend more to such considerations. We also expected leaders to have a contact pattern showing broad and frequent contacts and that is actually the strongest correlation in the regression analysis. The same type of expectation for civil servants with long tenure was not fulfilled, however. We expected leaders and people with long tenure to attend more to performance reporting and to see fewer coordination problems. Here we find an interesting and differentiated result, showing leaders to be more preoccupied with performance reporting, a typical vertical measure, and civil servants with long tenure more satisfied with cross-sectoral coordination, indicating that long experience and broad contact patterns matter.

Overall, the conclusion is that many of our main results could be fitted into a career perspective. As expected, of the two independent variables in the perspective, formal position is the strongest one and shows an expected and partly strong correlation with the dependent variables. There are, however, also some significant but weaker correlations related to tenure, meaning that position is not the only important aspect of the career

perspective. There is an independent effect of tenure, showing that civil servants with long tenure tend to work more with coordinative tasks, identify more broadly with the civil service and attend more to political signals.

The demographic perspective also seems to be significant. The story here is primarily that the jurists as an educational group are significant for nearly all the dependent variables. They work more with single cases and less with coordination than the other educational groups, they have the strongest overall identification pattern, they attend most to both political signals and professional considerations and they have overall the broadest and most frequent contacts. This shows that in many ways the jurists have managed to maintain their strong and dominant historical profile as civil servants. From 1814 onwards jurists dominated the central civil service in Norway and this lasted up until the 1970s. They held most of the leadership positions, their educational background meant their dominant administrative technology was rule-orientation, and they managed to combine proximity to political leaders with close attendance to professional norms and values (Slagstad 1998). Basically, they were the most professional group in the civil service, and this generally still seems to be the case.

The social scientists have a less clear profile as a group in the civil service, but are definitely emerging as a strong group competing with the jurists. If we compare the social scientists to the jurists, the significant results for the jurists are broader and stronger, but there are similarities between them concerning identification, signals and contacts. The main difference between the two groups is that the social scientists work less with rules and on single cases and much more with coordinative tasks. Rather surprisingly, the economists are similar to the jurists concerning working with single cases, while they have similarities with both the jurists and the social scientists concerning signals and contacts.

When it comes to gender women have much less contact with political, administrative and private actors than men, even after controlling for position. We believe that this result still reflects a gender difference, in that leadership experience imposes obligations and offers opportunities to develop a hierarchical contact pattern. The fact that women are more rule-oriented may also reflect this. Interestingly enough, women attend more than men to professional considerations, without scoring lower on political signals. This may indicate an orientation that is not only directed towards casework but also towards following norms that are important for recruitment.

Conclusion.

The data provided by surveys covering 30 years of development in the central civil service in Norway enable us both to trace development features and to discover the dynamics concerning the working of the civil service. We started out by describing the development in structure and demography over the three last decades. The main impression is one of both change and stability. While there have been significant changes in tasks, contact with interest organizations and along demographic dimensions such as gender and education, there has also been a stable pattern over time regarding rule-orientation and role considerations. From 1976 to 2006 there was no general decline in rule-orientation. Thus, the administrative culture seems to have been quite resistant to the reform ideas advanced by the NPM movement. The NPM movement does not represent a decisive move away from a rule-based approach.

The main picture is increased complexity. New reform tools have been added to existing measures. What we see is reforms with a supplementary function rather than a process in which post-NPM reforms have replaced NPM reforms. New measures have been added without a substantial reduction in the old ones. We do not see a general trend towards a deregulated, and entrepreneurial government, as suggested by the contemporary reform movement, but rather the emergence of some reshaped and some new reform tools often emerging in hybrid forms (Lægreid, Roness and Rubecksen 2007). Traditional Weberian administrative features, post-Weberian reform tools, NPM features and post-NPM measures are combined in a complex way (Christensen and Lægreid 2007a).

The main hierarchical structure of the civil service has changed during this period, i.e. the proportion of top leaders has been halved, while the share of mid-level positions has increased substantially. This is a reflection of a continuous process of structural differentiation in the civil service, which has resulted in more exclusiveness at the top and less access to top leaders who are struggling with capacity and attention problems. Another structural change is that more civil servants are working on planning and coordination tasks and fewer on single cases. This reflects a major principle of NPM, namely that the ministry should be a secretariat for the political leadership (Christensen and Lægreid 1998b). This means that a ministry should take care of planning, coordinative and strategic tasks, in addition to having the capacity to serve the political leadership on an ad hoc basis when needed, while single cases should be moved to the agencies. This is an old doctrine,

which became established in 1955 because of capacity problems in the political leadership, but was revived with the NPM reforms (Christensen 2003).

Concerning demographic features these three decades have brought about a radical increase in the proportion of women in the civil service from 15% in 1976 to 48% in 2006, with a less steep increase over the past decade. In terms of education, women have come to dominate the professions from which civil servants are mainly recruited, so their share will probably increase even more. They are also gradually climbing higher in the hierarchy, with the greatest increase in women in leadership positions in the last decade. The educational structure is also changing quite a lot. While the proportion of jurists has almost been halved since 1976, their share has remained stable over the last decade, probably reflecting the process of adaptation to the EU. The social scientists, dominated by political scientists, increased their share from 4% in 1976 to 24% in 2006, thereby taking over as the largest educational group. The proportion of economists has remained relatively stable.

We took as our point of departure tenure as a main variable of civil service development and compared this variable with structural and demographic variables. Tenure is different from other demographic variables because it does not attend to social background, but more to what happens in the course of a civil servant's career. We asked whether civil servants were living in the past, meaning whether their attitudes were primarily shaped by the period and context when they entered the civil service, and whether the tasks they have, the identities they develop, the signals and attitudes they have, and their contact patterns will later be heavily influenced by this. We labelled this a generational perspective and contrasted it with a career perspective, which focuses more on the experience accumulated in the course of a civil servant's career, which entails tenure and formal position variables, and with a demographic perspective, which focuses on individual demographic features. Rather than looking for single-factor explanations we need to understand the combinations of generational, career and demographic factors. A male jurist with long tenure and holding a high position will have a quite different civil servant profile to a female social scientist with short tenure and a low position.

The main results indicate clearly that civil servants are not living in the past, because few factors from the generational perspective seem to be significant. The strongest explanatory perspective is the career one, i.e. the experience that civil servants have acquired in the course of their career is significant for various indicators of decision-

making behaviour. Thus organizational socialization and discipline within the central government seem to be crucial. Organizational factors are crucial. Civil servants seem to adapt quickly to the requirements of the position they hold at any given time. When they move to a new position they also change their responsibilities and they adapt quickly to the constraints and opportunities connected with their new position. To understand their tasks, attitudes and contact patterns it is more important to know what their position in the organizational structure is than where they come from or how long their tenure is (Læg Reid 1988). Accumulating experience, according to this perspective, means on the one hand moving up the hierarchy gradually, giving civil servants an increasing number of leadership obligations and duties, but also, as they reach the top of the hierarchy, acquiring a more holistic perspective. But long tenure also implies being exposed to a broader variety of tasks and being pressured to think in broader terms and to be politically and professionally sensitive, accumulate contacts, etc. We show that of these two main cumulative factors, formal position is the most significant one, but tenure is evidently important as well and of independent significance. We also conclude that the demographic perspective is also significant, with the main effects connected with being a jurist, which has been the dominant professional group in the Norwegian central civil service for a long time.

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Appendix:

Dependent variables used in the regression analysis:

Tasks:

“How much of your working time would you estimate you have spent on various tasks over the last year”? We then listed 10 different tasks. For each task the civil servants were asked to answer on a scale from 1 (totally dominating) to 5 (totally absent); in this paper we use two of the tasks (single cases and coordination).

Identity:

“Below we will ask you to report how strong or weak your sense of belonging or identification is with the following organizational units”. We then listed four units and for each of them the respondents were asked to answer on a scale from 1 (very strong) to 5 (very weak). In this paper we use three of the units (own department, own ministry and central government in general)

Signals:

“What weight do you give to each of the following considerations while executing your tasks”? We then listed 12 different considerations and asked the respondents to answer on each of them on a scale from 1 (very important) to 5 (very unimportant). In this paper we use two of the considerations (signals from political executives and professional considerations).

Contact:

“If you think of your average yearly contact, approximately how often do you have contact with your own minister”. 1) Once a week 2) Once a month 3) Less often 4) Never.

“How often would you estimate that you had contact with the administrative leadership in your own ministry over the last year (Secretary General, Director General)?” 1) Once a week or more often 2) Once a month 3) Less often 4) Never. Not relevant is excluded.

“Approximately how often have you had work-related contact with organizations in business, trade and industry over the last year”? 1) Weekly or more often 2) Once a month 3) Less often 4) Never.

Reform orientation:

“In connection with the modernization and renewal work in the government several reform tools have been introduced. How important are the following reform tools in your own field of work”? We then listed 26 different tools and asked the respondents to rate each of them on a scale from 1 (very important) to 5 (not important at all). In this paper we use the tools: “Evaluation/performance reporting. New control and auditing routines”.

“How would you characterize the coordination of your own field of work with government bodies in other policy areas/sectors”? Respondents were asked on a scale from 1 (very good) to 5 (very bad).

Independent variables used in the regression analyses:

Tenure: 1) less than 5 years, 2) 5-15 years, 3) More than 15 years;

Position: 1) Lower position, 2) Director General/head of division and higher;

Gender: 1) Man, 2) Woman;

Jurist: 1) Yes, 2) No;

Social scientist: 1) Yes, 2) No;

Economist: 1) Yes, 2) No