



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICIANS AND ADMINISTRATORS – A LOGIC OF DISHARMONY

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The relationship between politicians (elected officials) and administrators (appointed officials) is the cornerstone to understanding the governing process and has always been highly debated in the public administration literature. Traditionally, the debate focuses on Weber's clear separation between politicians and administrators and a criticism of the basic assumptions of Weber's model. An alternative model is the Dichotomy-Duality-Model which gives a more varied description of the relationship between politicians and administrators. This article argues that in order to get a more thorough understanding of the complicated interaction between politicians and administrators, it is necessary to pay attention to the two groups' logic of action. It is argued that politicians are driven by inductive logic of action while administrators are influenced by a deductive logic of action. These two opposites create a logic of disharmony between the two agents. Empirical findings from counties in Denmark support the present and the resistance of the logic, since management tools designed to create a harmonious relationship between politicians and administrators are unable to change the logic of disharmony.

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Moving away from the classic model

The relationship between politicians and administrators is continuously under debate and there is an ongoing development both normatively as well as descriptively. The discussion is carried out in academia (for

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example, Svava 1990; Mouritzen and Svava 2002; Stewart 1993), as well as in the non-academic field (for example, OECD; ICMA; The Danish National Association of Local Authorities). Weber's classic model of bureaucracy, and especially its implication for the relationship between politicians and administrators, has been a foundation for most discussions (see Svava 1990). Weber's model, developed at the beginning of the 20th century, is an ideal-type and should not be seen as a normative model. In the traditional understanding of the division of labour between politicians and administrators, the two groups have separate roles. Politicians are to draw up visions, goals and general principles of action and develop strategies, while administrators are to implement the politicians' wishes and run the day-to-day administration (Weber 1922). In an American context, Woodrow Wilson put forward similar ideas as early as 1887 (Wilson 1887). The administration is a purely technical instrument. The work of the administration is based upon rules and regulations and is applied with neutrality (Mouritzen and Svava 2002). The characteristics of such a bureaucracy ensure tenure to staff and promotion based upon formal qualifications which in turn give independence from politicians.

This simple and unique division of work between politicians and administrators has developed into a normative ideal in western society. It is reinforced by various publications from interest organizations (for example, the OECD) and by the recycling of management ideas based upon the policy-management split (Røvik 1998; Antonsen *et al.* 2000, p. 35). This normative ideal contradicts several empirical studies showing a more complex interaction between politicians and administrators, and more diverse roles for the two sets of actors. Administrators are to a very large extent involved in the formulation of visions and objectives at the political level. Their involvement is not limited to choosing means but also involves ends. In other words, administrators play an active role at the political level. Likewise, politicians see a need to involve themselves directly with constituency cases and administration. Constituency cases refer in our understanding to a case which is *ad hoc*, concerns a specific set of individuals, and has a narrowly defined issue. Mouritzen and Svava (2002) use the term 'single cases' and Berg (2000) the term 'specific cases'. However, Berg (2000) shows that politicians construct their own understanding of cases, which makes it difficult to strictly categorize the cases as for example constituency cases. Politicians are very much involved in the implementation and administration of different policies (see, for example, Berg 2000; Svava 1990). Taking into account the massive critique of the classic model since Weber's work was published (see, for example, White 1926; Price 1941), one may ask why this understanding of the division of work between politicians and administrators maintains such a strong normative position. This is especially so considering that Weber in his own work had already confronted many of the problems. Several explanations may be put forward. First, the model is simple and therefore relatively easy to work with, explain

and communicate. Second, Weber's use of the concept 'ideal-type' may be misunderstood and interpreted instead as a normative ideal. Third, there is a huge emphasis on rational models within western society (March 1995). An example is Management-By-Objectives (MBO), introduced from the private sector under the umbrella concept New Public Management (Lane 2000). The harmony between MBO and Weber's classic model has had a mutually reinforcing effect on the two models and has broadened its diffusion within the public sector. In the last part of the paper we will discuss the relationship between MBO and the policy-management split further. First we discuss the logic behind politicians' and administrators' actions and give more empirical evidence that the logic of disharmony is at play.

The gap between the normative standard of separate roles and empirical studies has motivated the development of other models to understand the relationship between politicians and administrators. Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman (1981) introduce four images to describe the relationship between politicians and administrators, and Guy Peters (1987) describes five ideal-type models of interaction. In this respect, James Svara's Dichotomy-Duality-Model (1985, 1990) is interesting because it tries to reckon with a clear separation. The Dichotomy-Duality-Model recognizes the limitations of the classic model, and the need for a model based on real work situations. In the following sections we will introduce the Dichotomy-Duality-Model as described by James Svara (Svara 1985, 1990, 1998). Secondly, we will use the model as a starting point for some theoretical arguments and, finally, support our theoretical claims with a survey on politicians and administrators.

THE DICHOTOMY-DUALITY-MODEL

The model is developed in order to give a more realistic understanding than other models of the relationship between politicians and administrators. The Dichotomy-Duality-Model is inspired by classic decision-making theory and Weber's classic model. The model has four dimensions. Dimension one and two (Mission and Policy) is a specification of Weber's legal hegemony, while dimension three and four (Administration and Management) is a specification of Weber's bureaucracy-function. The four dimensions make it possible to broaden the classic roles and to make the transition from politicians and administrators more fluent as well as overlapping as indicated by empirical studies. The bold line in the Dichotomy-Duality-Model presented in figure 1, divides the governing process into two work fields or spheres and represents a division of leadership between politicians and administrators. In a traditional understanding of the governing process, these spheres are related to formal decision making and leadership in each of the four dimensions. However, as the model illustrates, politicians and administrators share this 'power over' in each dimension of the governing process and, accordingly, the model rejects politicians' monopolization of the legal hegemony as well as administrators' monopolization of the

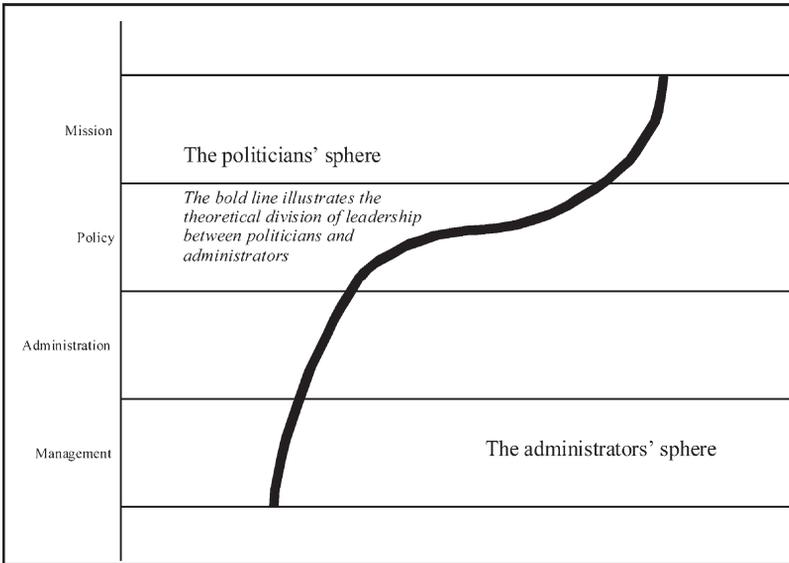


FIGURE 1. *The Dichotomy-Duality-Model*

bureaucracy-function. The blurred distinction between the two spheres over the four dimensions also represents a challenge to a clear-cut picture of democratic accountability and control, as it becomes more difficult to hold a specific person accountable for specific decisions.

The four dimensions: Mission, Policy, Administration and Management, cover the governmental and work process in every organization, public or private (Svara 1990, p. 7). In a public context, these tasks are carried out by politicians and administrators. As can be seen from the figure design, politicians' focus is on the top level while the administrators' focus is on the bottom. The Mission-dimension implies the task of setting the overall visions and goals for a business and, in this way, defines the purpose and scope for an organization. Examples of Mission tasks are tax-level, changes in the county's standing orders/ordinance, and the initiation of new and phasing out of existing services. Strategies for the regional level development are put forward and future scenarios are discussed and analysed. The second dimension – Policy – includes the operationalization of goals and visions ratified under the Mission-dimension. It is in this dimension that the budget is formulated and concrete decisions regarding programmes and choice of policy instrument are decided. Tasks within the policy-dimension include among others the attraction of funds from upper-level government and finding general principles of implementing services. Administration forms the third dimension in the interaction between politicians and administrators. In this dimension, the service is implemented and delivered to the public and complaints from citizens are dealt with and programmes and

service are evaluated. The last dimension is Management, which includes internal activities such as coordination of staff, employment of subordinate staff, complaints from employees and personnel procedures.

The four dimensions of the Dichotomy-Duality-Model in a county context can be illustrated by the following example. A county council defines a general need to improve the infrastructure within the region during the following two years (Mission). The administrators and politicians consider different actions and finally decide to expand a road between two major cities in the region (Policy). The technical considerations regarding the construction of the road are carried out by a civil servant from the technical division and a bidding process is carried out (Administration). In the last dimension (Management) an entrepreneur is chosen – private or public. Employees, who supervise the ongoing construction, are hired and trained. The example shows the content of the different dimensions. At the same time, it illustrates the difficulties in separating the dimension. It may also be difficult to determine whether politicians or administrators have the most influence in each dimension, as influence may vary, especially within the policy-dimension. The policy-dimension may be the one dimension with the most intense interaction between politics and administration. As Svava points out, administrators will be involved in giving advice on policies and thereby potentially influence the policy. On the other hand, the different policies will later be subject to discussions in the council (Svava 1990, p. 21). The way the interaction is carried out within the policy dimension may spill over into other dimensions. All in all, the dimensions give a more comprehensive and multi-faceted understanding of how real decisions are carried out compared to the classical model. At the same time, the model recognizes and pinpoints the division of labour and most of all the complementarities between the roles of politicians and administrators.

The model as such can be criticized for implying a zero sum game – a closed system. Within each dimension of the model, the tasks of politicians and administrators must add up to 1. This means that if a politician sees it as his most important cause to engage himself in constituency cases, it would be impossible for a manager to do the same. Accordingly, the administrators' behaviour determines the politicians' behaviour as well as the other way around. However, looking at the relationship between politicians and administrators as a zero sum game has its advantages. First of all, it pinpoints the fact that the relation between politicians and administrators is an interplay and, when trying to understand the behaviour of the one part, we must also consider the behaviour of the other part. Furthermore, the model allows that interdependency in the relationship is not strictly defined, because the boundaries within as well as between the four dimensions are fluid and overlapping, varying over time as well as between cases: this being one of the model's advantages in its descriptive context.

The model may also be criticized for neglecting 'politics' and relying too much on private sector characteristics. The public sector is infused with

values such as equality and neutrality to a much higher extent than a private organization. It is governed by a body elected by popular vote among citizens, not by an appointed board of directors. In other words, 'Other institutions, . . . , are not free from politics, but government is politics' (Appleby 1992, p. 147). On the one hand, the specific public context will clearly separate the dimension due to demands for democratic control and accountability. On the other hand, the tasks and problems which the public organization deals with may be characterized as wicked problems for which no uniquely perfect solution can be found. As a consequence, the definition of the problem is in itself often a trade-off between competing interests (Harmon and Mayer 1992). Thus, the model puts too little emphasis on politics as the struggle for competing interest, and it may be fruitful to discuss the dimensions more freely and open up to the specific logic behind the politicians as well as the administrators (see also Svava 1999).

LOGIC OF DISHARMONY

It makes no sense to talk about the political process without taking the administration into account and vice versa. Politics and administration are two separate, analytical components, but they are to a very high extent integrated into the same political process (Peters 1978, 1987, 1996). We are in need of a model which can describe the relationship as an integrated process with fluent borders. However, as shown, this is not an easy task. As a starting point, one must have a more thorough understanding of the basic assumptions underlying the behaviour of politicians and administrators.

In what follows, we argue for the existence of a logical disharmony between politicians and administrators based on two different logics of action (Ejersbo 1997, p. 259). The logical disharmony is based upon the following set of assumptions about politicians' and administrators' behaviour.

- The basis for political actions is constituency cases. Politicians approach issues case by case and from there form a general attitude towards the issue and focus on the competing interests with these cases. *Politicians can be characterized as having an inductive logic of action.*
- The basis for administrative actions is general statements of laws, rules, objective and values. Administrators approach specific cases and handle problems by referring to general laws, rules, objective and values and, accordingly, administrators focus on consensus of overall goals and strategies within the hierarchy of the organization. *Administrators can be characterized as having a deductive logic of action.*

The respective logics dominate the politicians' and administrators' actions, but the logics are not inclusive since other logics may, in certain periods, influence the relationship. Secondly, the logics are also dependent on the personal characteristics of the actors and they will also vary according to

time and specific institutional set-up: for example, time to next election, political composition in the council, media attention and so on. To understand the rationale behind the logic of action, we will, in the next two paragraphs, discuss the logic in the context of rational choice theories and theories about socialization taking place in politics and at the workplace with focus on a county context. These two approaches support the two logics of action as argued.

Rational choice

The well known theoretical basis of rational choice is the assumption of rational/bounded rational individuals with a fixed set of preferences seeking to maximize their utility. Their behaviour is strategic, calculated and opportunistic (Hall and Taylor 1996; Christiansen 1998). Politics is defined by many rational choice proponents as the struggle for power (Hall and Taylor 1996). Conflicting interest is the dynamics and the core of politics, where politics and politicians are seen as a means to mediate the many different interests that exist (Dahl 1961). However, politicians have a clear interest in re-election. In pursuing re-election they have an interest in keeping a high profile towards voters, news media and other politicians. In doing so, politicians also contribute to pluralizing interests, and they have a need for deviating interests – it could be said that politicians feed on mutual disagreement. As a consequence, politicians need to involve themselves in constituency cases in order to show determination and action. They also have to develop a reputation for keeping their promises to the public if they want to renew their ‘contract’ with the public (Laver 1997, p. 84). Furthermore, the involvement in constituency cases gives them the freedom to choose between the kind of cases, and to choose the ones that produce the most votes. This view of politicians can be criticized – as well as rational choice in general – for not taking altruistic motives into account. Some politicians may not just focus on their self-interests; they may take a broader approach towards the county and objectives such as ‘the good of the city’ that cut across lines of interest and that may not be a showcase for the single politician, but may also be part of their politics. It has been suggested that (local) politicians hold a number of different roles, which also illustrates that politicians can have a broad set of objectives. Berg (2000) points out that local politicians shift between roles containing different values. She also points out that a sharp division between constituency cases and more general goals and objectives is without relevance in everyday political life.

Politicians’ interests in constituency cases are not only a means to increase visibility towards the public, but constituency cases may also be an effective way to exert control over the administration. By following constituency cases politicians may gain an insight into the procedures of the administration and thereby increase the possibility of their finding cases of misuse of power by the administration.

Despite the general difficulty that exists for rational choice in dealing with altruistic motives, it is still a sound argument that to a large extent politicians will be driven by the desire to be re-elected and therefore have a strong interest in constituency cases.

Turning to the administrators, they are likewise driven by self-interest (Niskanen 1973; Downs 1967; Mueller 1979). Downs lists five self-interested motives by bureaucrats: power, money income, prestige, convenience and security (Downs 1967, p. 262). As mentioned above, administrators may also be driven by broader motives. Downs acknowledges the existence of these broader motives, but states that administrators will mostly be motivated by their self-interest. Niskanen (1973) points to somewhat similar motives and argues that administrators in public organizations will try to fulfil their motives by maximizing the budget of their department. Dunleavy (1991) suggests that administrators are more interested in shaping the organization in order to obtain interesting tasks.

A complementary strategy to those mentioned above will be to run the administration as smoothly and effectively as possible. Conflicts and diversity constitute obstacles when the administration needs to act (Brunsson 1994). Such obstacles are looked upon as counter productive and administrators seek to minimize these factors. As a consequence, administrators will focus on consensus within both strategies and organizational goals. They also have an interest in keeping politicians away from day-to-day business. Any interference from politicians may only cause problems and make the lives of the administrators even more problematic. And as suggested by Downs, administrators want to maximize their convenience. To protect their position, administrators will try to create a buffer around their powers so they can act independently and free from the political sphere. But in doing so administrators need to actively engage themselves in the sphere between politics and administration and, if they are capable of managing the apex of the governing process, their positions will be much stronger. A strong partnership between politicians and administrators can result in a plus-sum-game, where both actors strengthen their positions if they cooperate and, in this way, the interplay between politicians and administrators will constitute a stronger power base (Mouritzen and Svava 2002). However, administrators' incentives for stable and smoothly run organizations and the strategy to involve themselves in the political process to create a buffer for autonomous action, do not necessarily go hand in hand. Even more importantly, such strategies may be in direct conflict with the logic of politicians, as described above.

Most public organizations have a hierarchical structure which implies a need for rules and objectives that are set by a higher level within the organization. Rules and objectives are the conditions under which hierarchical organizations function. Using these objectives in the daily work implies a deductive way of thinking – going from the abstract to the specific.

In summary, then, politicians need the dynamics between competing

goals and constituency cases to justify their actions and to make themselves visible to the public. When forced to formulate more general objectives, their point of reference will be specific cases and constituency cases. Administrators, on the other hand, need the top-down approach and consensus both to gain control and to show effectiveness.

Socialization and recruitment of politicians and administrators

Politicians and administrators alike go through a socialization process before and after becoming politicians or administrators. Politicians selected in partisan communities must go through the party machinery (Prewitt 1970). In this way, political parties ensure that those elected have been influenced and educated in specific ways. In county councils in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, this feature is most prevalent among the politicians who all have a long career in their party organization (Hansen *et al.* 2000; Disch 1999; Mörk 2000). Secondly, these politicians will have participated in different forms of party work and have often been placed low on the ballot the first couple of times before being elected to the council. In a survey of Danish counties council members, 84 per cent of elected officials indicated that it was not the first time they had run for office, and on average each elected official in 1993 had run for office more than two and a half times since the 1970 election (Hansen *et al.* 2000). The socializing process which politicians go through has a considerable impact on their way of thinking and acting. The struggle up through the party organization also contributes to the reinforcement of conflicting values between politicians representing different parties. Throughout their entire career, they have debated specific issues with fellow politicians. This career reinforces an inductive way of thinking, going from specific to more abstract issues. Likewise, politicians go through a socialization process when they become council members. Many counties give newly elected members of the council an introduction to the county and its administration, emphasizing the need for politicians to focus on general matters.

In most countries, the jobs of local administrators in the public sector cannot be viewed as a genuine profession (Klausen and Magnier 1998). Nevertheless, they have some similarities to a profession and parts of the characteristics of a profession are relevant for public sector administrators. According to theories of professions, norms and values introduced during the education/training and career process will be carried over into the job itself and influence the handling of it (Macdonald 1995). Most top administrators have a university degree in either law, political science or economics. In the survey of Danish county administrators, 73 per cent of all administrators at the country level have a university degree, mostly in law, economics or political science (Ejersbo *et al.* 1998). These results are echoed in a survey of local government CEOs in 15 western democracies. As an example, 78 per cent of local government CEOs in Spain have a university degree and likewise in Sweden, where 90 per cent have a university degree,

the majority in political science (Klausen and Magnier 1998). This implies that public administrators at the local and county level are a relatively homogeneous group when it comes to education and training. When receiving these types of academic education, administrators are trained in a deductive way of thinking, as students are introduced to a general theory and, based on the theory, the students must be able to analyse and discuss a specific subject. This practice is well known in economics where 'laws' are used to guide the analysis. The deductive way of thinking, then, can be expected to influence how public sector administrators handle tasks and generally approach their jobs.

THE LOGIC OF DISHARMONY IN ACTION

In order to explore the idea of a logical disharmony further, we now analyse the interaction between politicians and administrators in county councils in Denmark. This meso level has often been neglected as a research field. More often, the focus has been either on the national level or even supranational level, or on the local level, an example being municipalities. The emergence of a genuine meso level is extremely important and thus the regional level has grown in importance (Sharp 1993, p. 36). In a Danish context, research is especially absent at the county level, despite the fact that the counties (Amter) handle around 10 per cent of the public expenditure, amounting to 6 per cent of the Danish GDP. Denmark has 14 counties, with an average population of 335 874, ranging from 45 000 to 628 000. The county level administers the healthcare service, including hospitals, medical care, and so on, and these services take up 64 per cent of the counties' expenditure. In addition, the county level is responsible for secondary schools and high schools, some road construction, and environmental control. Each county has a council which consists of directly elected officials, among whom the mayor is (indirectly) elected. The term is fixed for four years. The size of the council ranges from 17 to 31. (All data are from 1997, The Association of County Councils in Denmark 2000.) The analysis is based upon a study of Danish counties in 1997. Questionnaires were sent to all 374 council members in all 14 counties and the response rate was 78 per cent. Questionnaires were also sent to the three top management levels in the counties and here 480 out of 545 (88 per cent) responded. For more details see Buch Jensen and Ejersbo (1997), Ejersbo *et al.* (1998) and Buch Jensen *et al.* (1998).

The empirical findings are presented in figure 2. We asked politicians and administrators about their preferences concerning their role in the county council. We also asked administrators to assess the actual behaviour of politicians. Our design allowed only these three important cross-references. A complete mapping of actual behaviour and preferred role preference, including cross-reference between politicians and administrators, would demand $2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8$ sets of items to each respondent, expanding the questionnaire well beyond its limits (Hansen 1997). Furthermore, while con-

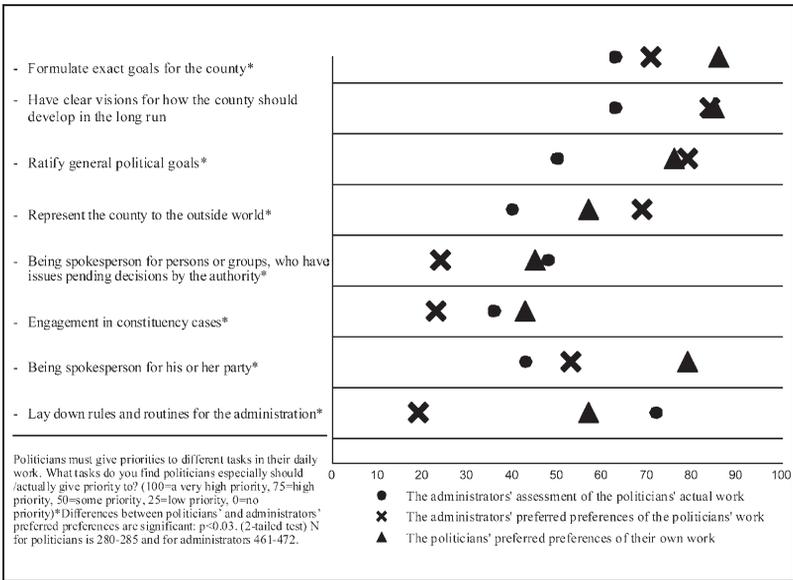


FIGURE 2. Key elements of the relationship between politicians and administrators in the Danish county context – the role of the politicians

structuring the questionnaire, county CEOs and members of county councils did not believe that part-time politicians would be able to give a valid assessment of managers' work. Focusing on the three cross-references (politicians' and administrators' preferences concerning their role in the county council, and the administrators assessment of the actual behaviour of the politicians) enable us not only to say something about preferences, but also about how politicians are carrying out their role as assessed by the administration.

If the critique of the classic model put forward above holds, we expect politicians to prefer a relatively high involvement in constituency cases and to involve themselves accordingly, and that administrators would prefer that politicians stayed out of constituency cases. With regard to the goal setting element (the first three items in figure 2), politicians and administrators have similar preferences (see figure 2). This similarity can be explained as a way politicians cope with the normative pressures from strong interest organizations and from administrators within the organization pushing politicians to focus on general matters. However, when the politicians' behaviour is assessed by the administrators, there is a clear discrepancy between the preferences of the politicians and administrators alike and the behaviour of the politicians. According to the administrators, politicians do not engage themselves enough in the goal-setting process and engage themselves far too much in constituency cases. This is shown by the constituency cases and the administrative routines (the last items in

figure 2), since the preferences towards the role of politicians among politicians and administrators show wide discrepancies. This is also what is suggested by the logic of disharmony and by politicians' inductive and administrators' deductive way of thinking. It is also evident that politicians prefer high involvement on all dimensions, which corresponds with findings presented by Svava (1990, p. 75).

Summarizing the findings in figure 2, politicians agree on the normative level when it comes to goal-setting tasks, but here the actual behaviour of the politicians represents a much lower involvement. Politicians and administrators have different preferences towards the role of politicians when it comes to involvement in constituency cases and administrative routines.

THE LOGIC OF DISHARMONY AND MANAGEMENT-BY-OBJECTIVES

The highly used management tool at the county level is Management-By-Objectives (MBO). The ideal behind MBO follows the classic definitions of organizations as social units seeking specific goals. Following MBO, the politicians would set up the overall objectives; these are then specified more carefully on each level in the organization. Each administrator is responsible for his or her objectives being fulfilled and for proper feedback mechanisms being established. Goal attainment is used directly as a means to sanction administrators positively as well as negatively (Drucker 1955; Peters 1995). In this way, the principles of MBO presuppose and reinforce a hierarchical understanding of organizations with a clear cut division of leadership on each level of the organization. The MBO principles and a classic Weberian division of leadership are mutually confirming models with the same assumptions. In county councils which implemented MBO according to the principles of MBO we would expect to find attitudes among politicians and administrators that reflected a more clear division of politics and administration. On the other hand, according to the logic of disharmony, we would expect to find that (for example) politicians need the constituency cases regardless of whether they are in an MBO county or not. We explored this by comparing the attitudes among politicians and administrators according to whether their county had implemented MBO or not. However, if the logic of disharmony is a general characteristic of the relationship between administrators and politicians, as we have argued, then MBO would face a severe obstacle if implemented in a county context. The survey of politicians and administrators also included several items on the concept of MBO. MBO is fully implemented for the entire county in 8 of the 14 counties (Ejersbo *et al.* 1998). If MBO was working according to its intention it should be possible to see differences in the relationship between politicians and administrators between the counties with MBO and counties without. Table 1 divides the sample into those counties generating MBO and those not.

On the one hand, MBO has an effect on administrators' preferences with

regard to politicians, involvement in constituency cases. Administrators in counties with MBO prefer a lower involvement from politicians in constituency cases than administrators from counties without MBO. On the other hand, MBO seems to have the opposite effect than expected on politicians' actual performance (see table 1). Politicians in counties with MBO are, according to the administrators, more involved in constituency cases than politicians from counties without MBO. However, the expectation by the administrators is influenced by the use of MBO, which again influences their standard for assessing the behaviour of politicians. On all other questions implementation of MBO does not change behaviour or normative preferences among politicians and administrators. This fact also implies that the implementation of MBO does not change the logic among administrators or politicians. The logic of disharmony survives, even when management methods are implemented, and to some extent it seems that MBO actually reinforces the politicians' logic since they are slightly more involved in constituency cases in counties with MBO. In this way, methods that are set to reinforce the hierarchic relationship and classic division of work between politicians and administrators are being outplayed by the strong political logic. In order to explore this point further, administrators and politicians were asked to express their views on MBO. These empirical findings are shown in table 2.

As the table shows, politicians are more in agreement than administrators that MBO will decrease politicians' visibility towards citizens. CEOs and department heads, who interact most with politicians, indicate that politicians' visibility will not decrease and that their own influence will not increase with MBO. Politicians also agree, to a higher extent than administrators, that administrative influence will increase with MBO. An interesting point is that the department administrators agree with politicians on this point. In a MBO sense, the levels of detail also increase down through the organization, and the interaction between department administrators and politicians is also less intense. However, section administrators express the view that MBO increases their own influence. On the other hand, CEOs and the department heads, who interact with politicians most, agree most that politicians will have difficulties in drawing up clear goals. Politicians and administrators agree to some extent that the administration is capable of steering and implementing the ratified goals. Furthermore, politicians indicate to a higher degree that constituency cases give necessary information to the choice of goals, indicating that politicians need constituency cases. Another interesting finding is that although MBO rated modestly, politicians as well as administrators believe that MBO is a suitable tool of general steering. The strong institutional pressure from interest organizations, higher levels of government and consultants may provide an explanation for these results. However, an explanation may also be due to the fact that politicians and administrators view MBO differently. In the light of the logic of disharmony this supports the above discussion and findings.

TABLE 1 *Key tasks in the work of politicians divided according to whether the county has implemented MBO*

	Politicians	Administrators	Actual assessment	Politicians		Administrators		Actual assessment	
				MBO county	Not an MBO county	MBO county	Not an MBO county	MBO county	Not an MBO county
Formulate exact goals for the county*	86	71	63	87	85	69	72	63	62
Have clear visions for how the county should develop in the long term	85	84	63	85	85	85	83	62	63
Ratify general political goals*	76	79	50	75	76	79	80	49	51
Represent the county to the outside world*	57	69	40	58	56	70	69	39	40
Being spokesperson for persons or groups, who have issues pending decisions by the authority*, ***	45	24	48	44	46	23	24	51	45
Engagement in constituency cases*, **, ***	43	23	36	43	43	21	26	40	32
Being spokesperson for his or her party*, **	79	53	43	80	78	51	55	43	44
Lay down rules and routines for the administration*	57	19	72	57	58	18	20	73	72

NB: Politicians must give priorities to different tasks in their daily work. What tasks do you find politicians especially should/actually give priority to? (100 = a very high priority, 75 = high priority, 50 = some priority, 25 = low priority, 0 = no priority).

*The difference between politicians and administrators is significant: $p < 0.03$ (2 tailed-test). N for politicians is 280–285 and for administrators 467–472 and, when divided on MBO, N for politicians is 131–152 and for administrators 228–240.

**The difference between administrators in counties with MBO or not is significant at the $p < 0.03$ (2-tailed test).

***The difference between administrators' assessment of the politicians' work in counties with MBO or not is significant at the $p < 0.02$ (2-tailed test). The CEO of each county was asked whether MBO was a permanent part in governing the entire county, only positive answers categorized the county as an MBO county.

TABLE 2 *Politicians' and administrators' views on Management-by-Objectives (MBO)*

Question	Politicians (N = 274–279)	CEO (N = 13)	Department heads (N = 52)	Sector administrators (N = 398–403)
1. MBO decreases politicians' visibility towards citizens	48	19*	27*	32*
2. MBO increases administrators' influence	59	37*	50*	58
3. As a general tool of steering within the county, MBO is suitable	82	83	84	82
4. MBO is difficult to implement in reality	42	40	36	44
5. Politicians will find it difficult to draw up clear goals	59	67	53	62
6. The administration and the institutions will have difficulties steering by the ratified goals	37	33	26*	33*
7. MBO gives a clear division between politics and administration	53	46	50	47*
8. Constituency cases give necessary information to the politicians' choice of goals	57	58	52	45*

NB: The questions are indexed 100 = strongly agree, 75 = somewhat agree, 50 = neither agree, nor disagree, 25 = somewhat disagree, 0 = strongly disagree. An average is calculated on each question. All questions are on a 5-point-scale.

*Indicates significant difference compared to politicians at $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed).

The administration believes in a hierarchical organization where visions and goals are set and implemented through the organization. However, administrators and politicians neither agree nor disagree that MBO gives a clear division of politics and administration, something which supports the claim that the classic model is not even to be found beneath the management tool which supports it.

CONCLUSION

The logic of disharmony can be described using two general statements:

1. The basis for political actions consists of constituency cases. Politicians approach issues case by case and from there form a general attitude towards the issues and focus on the competing interests with these cases. *Politicians can be characterized as having a inductive logic of action.*
2. The basis for administrative action consists of general statements of

laws, rules, objectives and values. Administrators approach specific cases and handle problems by referring to general laws, rules, objectives and values and, in this way, administrators focus on consensus of overall goals and strategies within the hierarchy of the organization. *Administrators can be characterized as having a deductive logic of action.*

These two statements represent a logic of disharmony as illustrated in the empirical findings from the Danish counties studied. The logic of disharmony is not a comprehensive model which gives a detailed account of the relationship between politicians and administrators. Rather, the logic of disharmony is presented in order to pinpoint certain dominating characteristics within the relationship between politicians and administrators, and the findings may be a first step in creating an innovative model to enable us to understand the relationship more clearly.

The empirical findings and the discussions are based on Danish counties around the turn of the millennium. The possibility of applying the argument to politicians in general will depend on the specific institutional context (e.g. media attention, political and electoral system), institutional environment (e.g. relative powers of interest organizations such as ICMA), as well as the degree of socialization and homogeneity of the politicians and administrators. In order to make the argument of logic of disharmony apply more generally, more systematic empirical work is needed and so any generalization should be kept to a minimum. Nevertheless, we find that the logic of disharmony does point at characteristics that may apply more broadly.

The logic of disharmony is first of all descriptive and can be applied when trying to understand and explain the relationship between politicians and administrators. Secondly, the logic gives an insight into why existing normative models often fail when implemented. Accordingly, the logic may also pinpoint the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between politicians and administrators, an understanding which should not be ignored when new models of the relationship are developed. If the intention of introducing new management tools is to encourage appropriate action (for example, more efficient procedures, more control, and clear boundaries between the tasks in the policy process), there is a need to find a balance between the normative and descriptive aspects of the models. Existing management models have to a large extent over-emphasized the normative aspect of the model, making them unrealistic and decoupled from real work situations. On the other hand, the normative element of the model is needed since it represents a reflection on which principles are both appropriate and desirable. Accordingly, future models of interaction should search for the fine balance between descriptive and normative aspects of the model, including considerations of existing routines and established practices as well as a reflection of the proper principles of the governing process. The logic of disharmony emphasizes the dynamic,

conflict-oriented and dialectical interaction between politicians and administrators. Thus, one way to develop new models of interaction in the future would be to acknowledge the multidimensional character of the relationship between politicians and administrators as suggested by the logic of disharmony.

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