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**MULTIPLE SHADES OF GREY: OPENING THE BLACK BOX
OF PUBLIC SECTOR EXECUTIVES' HYBRID ROLE
IDENTITIES**

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Abstract. Public sector reforms of recent decades in Europe have promoted managerialism and aimed at introducing private sector thinking and practices. However, with regard to public sector executives' self-understanding, managerial role identities have not replaced bureaucratic ones; rather, components from both paradigms have combined. In this article, we introduce a bi-dimensional approach (attitudes and practices) that allows for different combinations and forms of hybridity. Empirically, we explore the role identities of public sector executives across Europe, building on survey data from over 7,000 top public officials in 19 countries (COCOPS survey). We identify country-level profiles, as well as patterns across countries, and find that administrative traditions can account for these profiles and patterns only to a limited extent. Rather, they have to be complemented by factors such as stability of the institutional environment (indicating lower shares of hybrid combinations) or extent of reform pressures (indicating higher shares of hybrid combinations).

Keywords: Public sector reforms, role identities, public sector executives, hybridisation, bureaucracy, managerialism, administrative traditions

Introduction

From the late 1980s onwards, governments have been attracted by reform ideas that promote the professionalisation of management in order to make public administrations more efficient and effective (Hood, 1991; Kettl, 1987). Under the label New Public Management (NPM), business-style management concepts and instruments have been implemented into the public sector throughout Europe. Designed to increase public sector performance, such reforms aimed at shifting traditional Weberian-type bureaucracies—with their strong emphasis on legality and due process—towards managerial thinking and practices (e.g. Hood, 1991; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011; Schedler & Proeller, 2011).

Yet, it is widely acknowledged that reform measures do not lead to certain outcomes in a linear way, but rather develop their own momentum and result in varied, and often unintended,

effects (e.g. Diefenbach, 2009). Accordingly, instead of replacing one paradigm (bureaucracy) with another (managerialism), managerial reforms have added new layers to existing public administration. As Rhodes and colleagues (2008, p. 474) put it, it “is not a question of ‘in with the new, out with the old’, but of ‘in with the new alongside key components of the old’.” Scholarly research has summarised the resulting combinations of organisational features as ‘hybridisation’ (see Christensen, 2014; Denis, Ferlie & Van Gestel, 2015; Emery & Giauque, 2014; Hyndman et al., 2014; Polzer, Meyer, Höllerer & Seiwald, 2016).

In this article, we focus on one particular area where shifts in the leading paradigm have impacted the public sector, namely the role identities of public sector executives. A central aim of managerial reforms has been to shape the self-understanding of public sector executives; they should think, talk, and act as managers, not as bureaucrats. However, as Rhodes and colleagues noted, exposure to NPM did not lead to a reset; rather, extant research also finds hybridisation exhibited on the level of role identities (see Buffat, 2014; Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2006a; Meyer, Egger-Peitler, Höllerer & Hammerschmid, 2014; Van Bockel & Noordegraaf, 2006). Today, bureaucracy and managerialism serve as “two sources of identity” (Sennett, 2000, p. 172). While the notion of hybridisation successfully captures that elements from different paradigms are combined, it glosses over the insight that different sources of identity can be mixed in many different ways and result in very different combinations, thereby black-boxing the actual components of a hybrid identity (Byrkjeflot & Kragh Jespersen, 2014). This is why recent literature on the complexity and hybridity of public sector reforms calls us to carefully account for different kinds of hybridisation (e.g. Christensen & Lægreid, 2011; Polzer et al., 2016).

In order to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of hybrid identities, we suggest conceptualising role identity as a bi-dimensional construct drawing on *attitudes* as well as *practices*. As reform paradigms have impacted upon these two dimensions differently,

executives' identities may be pure—solely based on either bureaucratic or managerial components—or hybrid on either of these dimensions. This allows the distinguishing of a variety of combinations *within* each dimension (i.e. pure vs. hybrid attitudes and practices) as well as *across* the dimensions of attitudes and practices (i.e. pure vs. hybrid identities). To borrow an image from oenology: a cuvee that is composed of different types of grapes draws its specific taste from the difference of its elements. However, the cuvee is not just a melange of the wines of which it consists; rather, the connoisseur will, with greater precision, single out their distinct tastes, which, in interaction, account for the original quality of the cuvee. In this sense, in order to learn about reform dynamics it is not sufficient to acknowledge the existence of hybrid identities. Rather, a focus on the specific composition(s) of hybridity is required.

Executives' understandings of their role identities are obviously shaped by individual backgrounds and biographies. In this article, however, we are not interested in individual differences. As reform agendas are mostly decided on the national level, we are interested in the profiles of role identities in different countries and across administrative traditions (Brachem & Tepe, 2015; Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2010; Pollitt & Bouckaert 2011). Consequently, we ask: *What specific role identities do public sector executives in different European countries enact? What intra- and inter-dimensional identity patterns does a bi-dimensional (attitudes and practices) identity approach reveal across countries? What factors are able to account for particular country-level patterns, and to what extent are categorisations of administrative traditions able to account for such patterns?*

In order to explore these questions empirically, we use data from the COCOPS survey¹. The COCOPS survey is the most comprehensive survey conducted in the public sector in recent years. It comprises responses of more than 7,000 central government executives from 19

¹ The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme under grant agreement No. 266887 (Project COCOPS), Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities.

European countries along five different European administrative traditions. We find strong indicators of hybridity in most countries. However, by looking more closely into the components of hybrid identities (attitudes, practices and their combinations), we find different combinations and country profiles. In addition, our findings suggest that administrative traditions commonly used in comparative public administration (Painter & Peters 2010) can account for these profiles and patterns only to a limited extent. Rather, we find factors such as institutional stability or extent of reform pressures to be relevant.

In the following, we first review literature on the impact of managerial reforms on public sector executives' identities and elaborate our bi-dimensional identity concept, drawing on attitudes and practices. Based on this, we develop an analytical framework to analyse pure and hybrid identity constellations. After outlining our data and method, we map how pure and hybrid identity constellations are distributed across Europe, identify country-level identity profiles and offer some interpretations of these patterns. A short summary of our contributions as well as a short reflection upon the merits, limitations and future perspectives of such a bi-dimensional identity approach concludes the paper.

Conceptualising public-sector role identity as a bi-dimensional construct

NPM has been promoted since the 1980s as a solution to both the inefficiencies and often-bemoaned inertia of the public sector. These shortcomings were perceived as inherent to the bureaucratic Weberian organisation characterised by impersonality, professionalisation, specialisation, and a focus on predefined procedures, rules, and hierarchical structures (e.g. Hood, 1991; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011; Schedler & Proeller, 2011). Thus, proponents of NPM promoted result-oriented management modelled on the private sector (e.g. Kettl, 1987). Each of the two administrative paradigms provides ideal-typical role identities for executives, making public sector reform an identity project (e.g. Du Gay, 1996; Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2006b). Hence, paradigms are manifested in the role identities executives enact. Given that

reform paradigms are interpreted, adapted, and translated differently depending on geographic, institutional and cultural contexts (e.g. Buffat, 2014; Christensen & Lægreid, 2011; Hyndman et al., 2017), executives' role identities can grant access to the specific combinations of bureaucracy and managerialism at work in particular contexts.

The notion of identity has been addressed and conceptualised in numerous academic fields in diverse ways and for various purposes (for an overview see e.g. Cerulo, 1997). The relevant organisation studies and public management literature basically distinguishes between role identity and self-identity. While the latter refers to the individual self-understanding that is framed and influenced by various social spheres and their inherent expectations (family, workplace, etc.), role identity is understood as an institutionalised repertoire of expectations related to a specific social sphere. For example, Stryker and Burke (2000, p. 286) define a 'role' as "expectations attached to positions" and 'role identity' as "internalised role expectations". In this article, we focus on the role identities of public sector executives—i.e. what is regarded as both legitimate and appropriate conduct for top officials.

In the literature on public sector identities, role identity is often used as a monolithic concept; and although role identities are described according to different aspects (such as role understandings, motivation, or values), there is little scholarly work that systematically disentangles the components of role identities. Mostly inspired by detailed qualitative case studies of specific local sites (e.g. Buffat, 2014; Thomas & Davies, 2005; Vakkuri, 2010), we aim to address two demands: the need for a more nuanced conception of identity, and a mode of systematisation that allows for larger-scale and comparative insights. To address these gaps, we follow Ashforth and colleagues (2008) and propose a bi-dimensional identity concept that includes attitudes ('who we are') and practices ('what we do'). Our first dimension—namely *attitudes* such as role understandings, values, and beliefs—is commonly addressed in both the literature examining, and the surveys conducted amongst public sector employees (e.g. Hood,

1991; Meyer et al., 2014; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011; Rondeaux, 2006; Van Bockel & Noordegraaf, 2006). As a second dimension, we include *practices* as “the real locus of change” (Jeannot, 2006, p. 599)—an element that is mostly neglected when analysing institutionalised identities (Buffat, 2014; Lok, 2010). We assume that practices considered as appropriate for a particular paradigm cannot be derived directly from attitudes, but represent a distinct identity dimension. This independence depicts the formative character of our identity construct and emphasises the significance of how bureaucratic and managerial elements are combined across and within the dimensions of attitudes and practices.

Disentangling pure and hybrid identities

Weber’s concept of bureaucracy (and, accordingly, ‘the bureaucrat’) was considered—albeit with distinctive variations exhibited between countries (see section Administrative Traditions and Public Executive Identities)—to be the prototype of (European) public sector role identity until the 1980s. With the rise of NPM, a new role identity (‘the public manager’) emerged. The bureaucrat, being devoted to procedural rules, is sceptical of result-oriented managerial practices and embraces the values of equity and impartiality vis-à-vis the law; conversely, the public manager, defining his or her role as ensuring the efficient use of resources, applies managerial practices of performance measurement to ensure the fulfilment of predefined goals and believes in markets as governance mode. Taking these two ideal pictures of the bureaucrat and the public manager as heuristic devices, empirical studies have traced the extent to which public employees or executives in different countries enact these contrasting role identities and have argued that public top officials’ identities are increasingly ‘hybrid’ (e.g. Buffat, 2014; Emery & Giauque, 2014; Jeannot, 2006; Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2006a; Meyer et al., 2014; Rondeaux, 2014). This is in line with the scholarly diagnosis that ‘new’ identities in the public sector do not replace existing ones: rather than being monolithic entities, role identities are composed of multiple components that hybridise to varying

degrees—just like the underlying reform agendas follow goals and ideals that are themselves layered and sedimented (Christensen & Lægneid 2011; Hyndman et al., 2014).

Hybridity has become an appealing and widely used concept, but “it has become blurred as an analytical category and increasingly lacks conceptual clarity” (Polzer et al., 2016, p. 71). As an “umbrella concept” (Denis et al. 2015, p. 275), it has acquired the status of a ‘new black’ not only in the identity literature, but in organization research more generally. Yet, it often represents a black box—to the extent that some scholars warn hybridity and hybridisation may actually only be “pure hype” (McCambridge, 2014, p. 8). Echoing a broader claim (e.g. Denis et al., 2015; Emery & Giaque, 2014), scholars have therefore been calling for further, more differentiated approaches to hybridity (e.g. Battilana et al., 2017). As different forms of hybridity are currently covered by the same vague term, to simply acknowledge the co-presence of components rooted in different administrative paradigms (such as bureaucracy and managerialism) is therefore no longer sufficient to address the multiple greys that arise from such combinations. Instead, new scholarly work dealing with hybridity is expected to differentiate the various types and mixing mechanisms of hybrid combinations (Byrkjeflot & Kragh Jespersen, 2014; Polzer et al., 2016).

To open the black box of executive role identities in the public sector, we suggest a bi-dimensional approach that allows for a differentiation (in terms of the conceptualising, mapping, and comparing) of pure and hybrid identity combinations. In order to better capture these combinations in different European countries, we distinguish two levels of analysis: first, combinations of components within a single dimension (pure vs. hybrid attitudes and practices); second, combinations across the two dimensions of attitudes and practices (pure vs. hybrid identities).

In more detail, pure bureaucratic attitudes or pure bureaucratic practices imply that a respondent not only identifies strongly with bureaucratic components in a particular dimension,

but at the same time displays low managerial components in the same dimension (table 1). In the same way, pure managerial attitudes or pure managerial practices denote cases where a respondent scores high on managerial and low on bureaucratic components within the same dimension (table 2). Hybrid attitudes or practices denote cases where respondents combine identity components from the two different paradigms within a single dimension (table 3). Hybrid attitudes refer to the simultaneous expression of bureaucratic and managerial attitudes, and hybrid practices to the simultaneous expression of bureaucratic and managerial practices.

Table 1: Pure Bureaucratic Attitudes and Practices

	High Bureaucratic Attitudes	High Bureaucratic Practices
Low Managerial Attitudes	Pure bureaucratic attitudes	
Low Managerial Practices		Pure bureaucratic practices

Table 2: Pure Managerial Attitudes and Practices

	Low Bureaucratic Attitudes	Low Bureaucratic Practices
High Managerial Attitudes	Pure managerial attitudes	
High Managerial Practices		Pure managerial practices

A pure identity combines pure attitudes and pure practices that are both rooted in the same paradigm (tables 1, 2, and 4). Thus, a pure bureaucratic identity combines pure bureaucratic attitudes and pure bureaucratic practices. In the same way, a pure managerial identity consists of pure managerial attitudes and pure managerial practices. Hybrid identities denote cases where executives combine bureaucratic and managerial identity components across the dimensions of attitudes and practices (table 2). Hybrid identities manifest in two forms: a combination of managerial attitudes and bureaucratic practices (type A), or, conversely, of bureaucratic attitudes and managerial practices (type B).

Table 3: Hybrid Identity Combinations

	High Bureaucratic Attitudes	High Bureaucratic Practices
High Managerial Attitudes	Hybrid attitudes	Hybrid identity (type B)
High Managerial Practices	Hybrid identity (type A)	Hybrid practices

Table 4: Pure Bureaucratic and Pure Managerial Identities

	Pure Bureaucratic Attitudes	Pure Managerial Attitudes
Pure Managerial Practices		Pure managerial identity
Pure Bureaucratic Practices	Pure bureaucratic identity	

Administrative traditions and public executive identities

Administrative traditions are clusters of national public administrations that share substantial institutional and cultural characteristics. Therefore, they also represent well-received categories for capturing patterns of reform trajectories and comparing how reform activities unfold in different administrative contexts. In more detail, administrative traditions have been identified as helpful vehicles for explaining the attitudes and practices of public executives (Bevir & Rhodes, 2012)—i.e. identities. The extant literature identifies clusters of countries (Kuhlmann & Wollmann, 2014; Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2010; Painter & Peters, 2010) along three lines: first, a common law tradition and a legalistic tradition (based on Roman law); second, shared historical roots (such as the Soviet-influenced past of Eastern European countries); and third, the overall national culture (such as the consensus-oriented culture towards openness, transparency and low power distance in Scandinavian countries). In our research question we ask, how far categorisations of administrative traditions, as developed in comparative public administration research, are apt to capture country-level identity patterns. We will therefore draw on these classifications as heuristic devices to analyse the differences in executive role identities we find in our investigated countries.

Following extant research, we draw on five country groups: Anglo-Saxon/liberal (Ireland, UK and the Netherlands), Eastern (Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, and Serbia), Germanic/legalistic (Austria, Germany), Napoleonic (France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain), and Nordic countries (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden).

The *Anglo-Saxon liberal tradition* is basically rooted in a common law tradition, in which a formalistic codification of legal rules is comparatively rare. These countries can be denoted as liberal, since universal state benefits and the redistribution of wealth is less valued (Esping-Andersen, 1990) and managerialism is a distinctive feature of the administration, which mainly consists of pragmatism-inspired generalists and basically aims at flexibility and ad-hoc solutions (Painter & Peters, 2010; Raadschelders, 2015). In terms of executive identities, we expect these countries to be the forerunners of managerialism (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011), which means a higher share of pure managerial as well as fewer pure bureaucratic and hybrid identities than in the overall sample.

Countries from the *Eastern European tradition* have experienced a transformation from a centralised planning state system towards a more continental European constitutional state and administrative model (Goetz, 2001). However, especially during the EU accession phase, such countries have been exposed to many managerial reforms favoured by the European Commission. Interestingly, due to the different patterns of development exhibited by these countries (Kickert, 2011; Kuhlmann & Wollmann, 2014; Raadschelders, 2015), we expect more country variations and a higher share of hybrid identity combinations.

Austria and Germany are inscribed in a Continental European (Kuhlmann & Wollmann, 2014; Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2010) or *Germanic tradition* (Kickert, 2011; Painter & Peters, 2010; Raadschelders, 2015), having a strong legalistic administrative culture ('Rechtsstaat') with comprehensive codification and a large share of legally trained executives. They have been more hesitant in implementing management reforms and have been described as 'maintainers'

(Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). Thus, we would expect a higher share of pure bureaucratic identity combinations than in the overall sample.

France, Italy, Portugal and Spain share a *Napoleonic tradition* (for the basic characteristics see Kickert, 2011; Painter & Peters, 2010) that features a particular legal tradition, emphasising the importance of statutory law and centralised governments whilst, at the same time, preferring administrative practices with more space to ‘by-pass’ formal guidelines. Some Napoleonic countries have been exposed to increasing reform pressures and managerial reforms (e.g. France, Italy and Portugal); thus, we would expect a shift of identities towards managerial practices and a higher share of hybrid identity combinations than in the overall sample.

While a Scandinavian or *Nordic tradition* (Painter & Peters, 2010; Kuhlmann & Wollmann, 2014; due to the strong Swedish and Finnish influence in the post-Communist transformation, Estonia is also integrated here, see also Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2010) shares its basis in Roman law with a Continental European tradition, there are crucial differences regarding the overall transparency and accessibility of the administrative system. The Nordic model is also characterised by a heavy weight on government and public solutions as well as on universal welfare systems. There are, however, substantial variations between the countries—an example being the different national approaches to the financial crisis of 2008 (Greve, Lægreid & Rykka, 2016). In terms of identities we would therefore expect a ‘mixed’ picture with no particular combinations standing out compared to the overall sample.

Data and method

Dataset

Our data stems from a large-scale survey conducted amongst top public officials in 19 European countries. This survey was conducted as a part of the European Commission-funded

COCOPS project and marks the hitherto largest and most systematic survey of its kind.² The questionnaire covered executives' personal values and attitudes, work satisfaction and commitment, their experience of their working context, interaction and coordination with various other actors, politicisation, implementation and assessment of reform measures, as well as the use of management instruments. The questions were mostly posed in the form of a Likert-scale that asked the respondents to qualify their agreement with a statement from 1 (no agreement) to 7 (full agreement). With regard to our research questions, we take executives' responses as indicative of attitudes and practices that they regard as appropriate to their roles (Mills, 1940).

Following a country-comparative approach, the questionnaire was translated and slightly adapted to the local environment of each country by the particular teams that conducted the survey in each nation. What differentiates the COCOPS survey from most other surveys on executives in public administration is the fact that it represents a full census of all core government ministries and agencies (under public law) and that there has been no sampling process. This comprises federal ministries and agencies, and, in line with some countries' local characteristics (e.g. a federal system in Germany or a strongly regionalised government system in Spain), some state or regional level administrative units. In all these public sector organisations, the top two to three hierarchical levels were addressed. By the end of 2014, a central government sample with 7,077 answers from 19 European countries³ was available—with an overall response rate of 28.3% (country response rates ranging from 10.9% in the UK to 53.5% in Serbia).

² Survey, method description and dataset are available open access through the *Gesis Social Science Data Archive*: <https://dbk.gesis.org/dbksearch/>. Accessed on July 20, 2018.

³ Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, and UK

Although we cannot claim full representativeness for the data, and the results cannot be generalised to the entire target population of senior public sector executives in these 19 countries, the response rates are well in line with other public sector executive surveys. They cover a substantial part of the targeted population, and the distribution of respondents with regard to policy field, hierarchical level and organisation type, quite closely matches the distribution in the full target population and can be regarded as a good proxy and by far the most representative dataset for European public administrations collected to date (Hammerschmid, Oprisor & Štimac, 2013).

Operationalising bureaucratic and managerial attitudes as well as practices

In line with previous research on identities in the public sector (for a similar approach, see Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2006a), for operationalising distinct bureaucratic and managerial attitudes and practices we identify ‘signature’ attitudes and practices that clearly cue a particular administrative paradigm. To identify such unambiguous identity markers, we first deduced from the literature what would be ideal types of bureaucratic and managerial identities, and what attitudes and practices they include (see table 5).

We then selected all items from the questionnaire that relate to attitudes and practices. As we drew on the COCOPS dataset, we selected them from a pre-fixed battery of questions, which means that we were unable to design any questions according to our analytical scheme. In terms of balancing this shortcoming, we applied a careful procedure for choosing items: each author individually selected the items that they found most representative of ideal-type bureaucratic as well as managerial attitudes and practices. We then compared, discussed and adapted our selections and collectively defined four item sets for measuring bureaucratic as well as managerial attitudes and practices (see table 5). We paid attention that an item did not occur in another set in reversed form. This was important as, according to our conceptualisation of hybridity, we constructed bureaucratic and managerial identity elements not as mutually

exclusive endpoints of one single spectrum, but as distinct dispositions. This means that it is possible to achieve a high score on both managerialism and bureaucracy, making visible the different forms of hybridity.

Table 5: Operationalization of bureaucratic and managerial attitudes and practices (* reverse items)

Operationalization of identity element	Question in questionnaire
<p><i>Bureaucratic attitudes:</i> In order to assess the degree to which respondents enact bureaucratic attitudes as part of their role identity, we build on the following considerations: An important legitimation/motivation for the role of a ‘civil servant’ lies in the value of contributing to the ‘public good’, understood as going beyond the requirements of single citizens (van Bockel and Noordegraaf, 2006). This is to be accomplished through applying the values of impartiality, equal treatment of citizens and strict compliance to the given rules. More pragmatic motivations for engaging in the public sector might be provided by the generally high job security and continuity of careers in public administration. Thus, bureaucratic attitudes include strong risk avoidance.</p>	<p>Q5_1: I mainly understand my role as public sector executive as ensuring impartial implementation of laws and rules. strongly disagree (1) ... strongly agree (7)</p> <p>Q5_4: I mainly understand my role as public sector executive as providing a voice for societal interests. strongly disagree (1) ... strongly agree (7)</p> <p>Q23_2: Public services often need to balance different priorities. Where would you place your own position? * equity (1) ... efficiency (7)</p> <p>Q23_3: Public services often need to balance different priorities. Where would you place your own position? * following rules (1) ... achieving results (7)</p> <p>Q25_7: Reversed: Please indicate how far you agree or disagree with the following statements: I like to take risks* strongly disagree (1) ... strongly agree (7)</p>
<p><i>Bureaucratic practices:</i> Continuity and hierarchical chain of command are two pillars of the Weberian traditional administrative paradigm. Hence, practices that are specific for bureaucrats are in line with the central value of rule following. Maintaining the status quo and applying (only) the techniques required by superiors in the hierarchy are thus leading practices. Thus, management instruments, such as performance indicators (some instruments are even legally required) are only used upon explicit request by a respondent’s hierarchical superior.</p>	<p>Q25_5: Please indicate how far you agree or disagree with the following statements: I avoid doing anything that might upset the status quo. strongly disagree (1) ... strongly agree (7)</p> <p>Q9_5: In my work I use performance indicators to satisfy requirements of my superiors.* not at all (1) ... to a large extent (7)</p>
<p><i>Managerial attitudes:</i> To assess the degree to which respondents enact managerial attitudes, we build on the following considerations: In NPM, executives in the public sector are conceptualized as ‘managers’ whose motivation is primarily related to the aim of managing a certain agenda as effectively and efficiently as possible. For doing so, managers choose the most efficient means and show a priority for market provision of public services. Thus, ‘managers’ value (generic) managerial expertise rather than professional knowledge and skills (van</p>	<p>Q5_6: I mainly understand my role as public sector executive as providing expertise and technical knowledge.* strongly disagree (1) ... strongly agree (7)</p> <p>Q5_8: I mainly understand my role as public sector executive as ensuring efficient use of resources. strongly disagree (1) ... strongly agree (7)</p>

<p>Bockel and Noordegraaf, 2006). Managerial attitudes typically encompass a high inclination to striving for success as an appropriate motivation.</p>	<p>Q23_5: Public services often need to balance different priorities. Where would you place your own position? state provision (1) ... market provision (7)</p> <p>Q25_6: Please indicate how far you agree or disagree with the following statements: Being successful is very important to me. strongly disagree (1) ... strongly agree (7)</p>
<p><i>Managerial practices:</i> A managerial paradigm is outcome- rather than process-oriented. In contrast to bureaucrats who use performance indicators only upon hierarchical request, managers also use performance indicators for personal benchmarking purposes. Likewise, they would emphasise the positive impact of such measures on their organisation, which goes along with the strong believe in the advantages of management instruments.</p>	<p>Q9_1: In my work I use performance indicators to assess whether I reach my own targets. not at all (1) ... to a large extent (7)</p> <p>Q8_7: To what extent do the following statements apply to your organisation?: We are rewarded for achieving our goals. strongly disagree (1) ... strongly agree (7)</p>

Data analysis

For our analysis, we develop country-level profiles of executive identities in three steps. *First*, we identify the role identities on the individual level. We derive sum variables of the selected items for bureaucratic attitudes, managerial attitudes, bureaucratic practices and managerial practices. Each respondent is assigned scores on these four sum variables. In order to compare scores, which are calculated from different numbers of items, we translate them to a scale from 0 to 1. This means that every respondent receives values which vary from 0 (disagreement) to 1 (total agreement) for each sum variable. These four scores express individual (dis-) agreements to attitudes and practices rooting in the different paradigms. For determining groups of high, medium and low agreement, we use the standard deviation as a relational measure, rather than defining fixed thresholds. We categorise values that deviate by more than half the standard deviation from the mean value as ‘high’ or ‘low’, others as ‘medium’.⁴

⁴ Such an approach is sensitive to general patterns in the overall sample and thus provides a relational measure. If in the overall sample a particular value is generally high, only individual values that deviate even more are considered as ‘high’ or ‘low’. This fits our aim to compare the relative sizes of groups featuring particular pure and hybrid identity formations across countries.

Second, we then assign binary codes ('given' or 'not given') to every respondent depending on whether s/he features particular combinations of high and low identity components (ten in our case⁵, see tables 1, 2, 3 and 4) or not. We then calculate the per-country shares of executives that enact such pure and hybrid identity combinations.

Third, we investigate whether country-level results deviate significantly from the overall sample based on the standardised residues of the country-level shares of each combination. For standardised residues smaller than '-2' we code '-1' (significantly lower share compared to the overall sample), for higher than '2' we code '1' (significantly higher share), and for values between '-2' and '2' we code '0' (no significant deviation from the overall sample). The resulting country-level identity profiles are presented in table 6 .

Findings

In the following, we present the distribution of pure and hybrid identities across European countries. We start with an overview of the overall sample (for the detailed figures see appendix 1), which marks the reference point for the country-level profiles. Across Europe, we find that purity is more common in the attitude dimension than in the practices dimension: 9.8% of the European public sector executives surveyed display pure bureaucratic attitudes (highest in Italy, Hungary and Sweden with more than 20%), and 11.7% pure managerial attitudes (highest in UK and the Netherlands with more than 30%). In turn, we only find 3.7% displaying pure bureaucratic practices (highest in Spain and Hungary, with over 12%), and 2.4% pure managerial practices (only Estonia exhibiting more than 10%). Pure identities combining pure attitudes and practices from the same paradigm are very rare: we only find 0.6% (40 executives) in the overall sample that feature a pure bureaucratic, and 0.5% (34 respondents) a pure managerial identity. We find a similar share of hybrid attitudes (7.0% of

⁵ Pure bureaucratic identity, pure bureaucratic attitudes, pure bureaucratic practices, hybrid attitudes, hybrid practices, hybrid identity type A, hybrid identity type B, pure managerial identity, pure managerial attitudes, pure managerial practices

Table 6: Country-level profiles of executive identities

Country	Pure bureaucratic			Hybrid				Pure managerial			Group
	Attitudes and Practices (identity)	Attitudes	Practices	Attitudes	Practices	Identity Type A	Identity Type B	Attitudes and Practices (identity)	Attitudes	Practices	
Spain	1	1	1	0	-1	-1	1	0	-1	0	Group 1
Hungary	0	1	1	-1	0	0	-1	-1	-1	0	
Norway	0	1	0	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	0	0	
Iceland	0	0	1	1	0	-1	1	0	-1	0	Group 2
Italy	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	
Lithuania	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	-1	-1	0	
Serbia	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	-1	0	(no group)
Sweden	0	1	-1	0	0	1	-1	-1	0	0	
Croatia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
France	0	0	0	-1	-1	-1	-1	0	0	0	Group 3
Austria	0	0	0	-1	-1	-1	0	0	0	1	
Germany	0	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	1	-1	0	
Denmark	0	0	-1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	Group 4
Portugal	0	-1	0	0	0	-1	1	1	0	0	
Estonia	0	0	-1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	
Finland	0	0	-1	1	-1	0	-1	0	1	1	Group 5
Netherlands	0	-1	-1	0	-1	-1	-1	1	0	0	
Ireland	0	-1	0	-1	-1	-1	0	1	0	0	
UK	0	-1	-1	0	-1	-1	0	1	0	1	

all respondents) and hybrid practices (7.7% of all respondents) in the overall sample. Looking at hybrid identities, 6.7% combine pure bureaucratic attitudes with pure managerial practices (type A), and 8.2% combine pure managerial attitudes with pure bureaucratic practices (type B).

Table 6 shows our findings as country-level identity profiles. We ordered profile characteristics from high shares of pure bureaucratic, to high shares of pure managerial and low shares of pure bureaucratic identities (first order level), as well as from low to high shares of hybrid combinations (second order level).

Discussion: Identity-profile patterns within and across administrative traditions

Our findings indicate five empirical country clusters with similar identity profiles: *First*, Spain, Hungary and Norway (group 1) feature a higher share of pure bureaucratic as well as an overall lower share of hybrid identity combinations. Interestingly, this group is composed of countries from different administrative traditions. *Second*, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania and Serbia (group 2) also feature higher shares of pure bureaucratic identity combinations than the overall sample, yet combined with a higher share of hybrid combinations. This group includes two countries from the Eastern tradition and two countries each from a different tradition. *Third*, France, Austria, and Germany (group 3) show rather average shares of pure managerial and bureaucratic, but low numbers of hybrid identity combinations. This group includes both Germanic countries plus France as a Napoleonic country. *Fourth*, Denmark, Portugal, Estonia and Finland (group 4) are characterised by a higher share of pure managerial as well as by a moderate share of hybrid identity combinations. This group consists of three Nordic countries (except Norway and Sweden) and one Napoleonic country. *Fifth*, the Netherlands, Ireland and the United Kingdom (group 5) clearly show a higher share of managerial identities combined with lower shares of hybrid identity combinations. This country group is consistent with the Anglo-Saxon liberal tradition. Eventually, Sweden and Croatia do not display profiles that fit

into any of the proposed country groups. The identity profile of Croatia is largely congruent with the overall sample. Sweden, in contrast, displays a unique, yet rather inconsistent profile that differs from all other countries.

Overall, our study demonstrates that our conceptual framework can be fruitfully employed for mapping different patterns of executives' role identities in the public sector. Yet, comparing identity profiles and patterns across European countries directs attention to some surprising heterogeneity, especially with regard to administrative traditions.

We find that identity patterns are rather coherent within the *Anglo-Saxon liberal* and the *Germanic* traditions. Results confirm our expectations that the managerial paradigm has taken a strong hold in the Anglo-Saxon liberal tradition: these countries show higher shares of pure managerial and lower shares of both pure bureaucratic and hybrid identity combinations. Surprisingly, pure managerial identities in the dimension of practices are, in line with the overall sample, rarely found in these countries. This could be interpreted as a sign of normalisation, as managerial practices are taken for granted as appropriate conduct and are thus no longer deemed as especially notable. In addition, we find that Germanic countries are rather coherent in their identity patterns: both countries show low shares of hybrid identity combinations. However, in the light of the usual description of this tradition as being strongly rooted in a Weberian paradigm, given higher shares of a pure managerial identity (Germany) and pure managerial practices (Austria), our results indicate a substantial managerialisation in both of them. The category of an *Eastern European* tradition, however, seems to be increasingly questionable, which might be due to the fact that over 25 years have passed since their departure from a shared legacy. Eastern countries show substantial variation. For Lithuania, Serbia and especially Hungary we find a clearly higher share of bureaucratic identity combinations. These countries show only a small share of pure managerial, but varying degrees of hybrid identity combinations. We find rather high shares of hybrid combinations in Serbia and Lithuania that

confirm our expectation of highly dynamic reform forces being at work. Yet, this is not the case for Hungary. The *Nordic* tradition is only partly in line with our expectations. We find similar identity patterns in Denmark, Estonia and Finland. They show higher shares of pure managerial as well as, to a moderate extent, hybrid identity combinations. However, other Nordic countries (Iceland, Norway and Sweden) differ considerably, which indicates substantial divergence amongst the Nordic tradition. Executive identities in Norway, for example, are less managerial than the rest of Scandinavia. We find more pure managerial combinations in Sweden (especially with regard to practices) and Iceland (with a higher level of hybridisation). As each Napoleonic country is found in a different group, the *Napoleonic* tradition is not a convincing indicator for a distinct identity pattern either. This can be related to significant cultural differences (e.g. France vs. Southern countries) and/or different reform pressures these countries have experienced over the last decades.

A core result of our analysis is that not only do the five country groups deviate considerably from our initial expectations, but that our findings also document considerable heterogeneity within countries, which makes them rather difficult to interpret. However, our results clearly challenge assumptions of path-dependent developments along shared administrative traditions. What other factors may help our understanding of country-level profiles and their patterns?

Looking at the reform dynamics in the individual countries, a higher dynamic might be mirrored in higher shares of hybrid identity combinations. In terms of hybrid identities, higher shares of type A might signal more traditional civil services with strong pressures to incorporate managerial practices. Expectations to embrace managerial practices might have already been internalised as desirable to a considerable extent. Higher shares of type B might indicate traditional civil services with higher institutional stability and therefore weaker calls for managerial reforms, which manifests in the continuing domination of bureaucratic practices.

Managerial attitudes, however, may have entered such services due to higher job mobility from the private into the public sector ('revolving doors' implemented via new recruiting policies). Higher shares of both hybrid identity types, however, may indicate the multifacetedness of heavy reform dynamics at play in a country.

We could think of pressures for changes as patterning elements that indicate higher levels of hybrid identity combinations (group 2 and 4); such elements, for example, being manifest in the form of EU pre-accession demands on recent or future member states, or being due to the economic crisis and related austerity and reform measures (e.g. in the cases of Estonia, Iceland, Ireland and Portugal; see Sørensen, Hansen & Kristiansen, 2018). Such pressure might enforce the integration of certain components (such as managerial practices that are seen as necessary for dealing with a financial crisis) into executive identities; but as these are taken over quickly, and are not (yet) part of a deeper cultural change, earlier and divergent identity components might remain stable at the same time. For example, in the case of group 2, which has the highest share of hybrid identity combinations, we assume externally imposed reform pressures as shared elements that indicate identity profiles with higher levels of hybridisation. For example, Serbia is currently experiencing strong external reform demands in the form of EU pre-accession requirements. Similar demands have been experienced by Lithuania, which was preparing for the EU presidency when the COCOPS survey was conducted. Such experiences might considerably influence what is perceived as an appropriate public-sector executive identity. Iceland has been strongly hit by the financial crisis of 2008, and Italy has seen a rather managerial reform agenda politically imposed during the 1990s. In contrast to group 2, we find a strikingly lower share of hybrid combinations in larger countries with higher institutional stability, such as Spain (group 1), as well as Germany and France (group 3). The lower level of hybridisation and overall strong deviation from the other Nordic countries in Norway (group 1) may be linked to the lack of reform pressure in a country with a uniquely strong economic position. In groups 1, 3 and 5, patterning elements, such as the high

institutional stability or the absence of reform pressures (especially group 1), indicate comparatively low levels of hybridisation. In such stable contexts, however, managerial identity components may have already complemented the traditionally dominant bureaucratic legacy to a considerable degree (group 3).

Conclusion: Contribution, limits and future developments for studying public sector identities

We conclude by reflecting upon the merits and limits as well as the possible future developments and applications of our approach. Building on scholarly work that ascertains the complex implications of managerial reforms in central governments across Europe, we focused on executive role identities as a crucial area where such impacts become manifest. We therefore asked: *What specific role identities do public sector executives in different European countries enact? What intra- and inter-dimensional identity patterns does a bi-dimensional (attitudes and practices) identity approach reveal across countries? To what extent are categorisations of administrative traditions able to account for such patterns?*

With our bi-dimensional identity model, and its application for mapping and comparing pure and hybrid executive identities across European countries, we make three main contributions:

First, by combining the two dimensions of attitudes and practices we are able to study executive identities more comprehensively. This approach accounts for potentially different impacts of reform measures upon these two dimensions. Our focus on different forms of hybrid identities that combine components from bureaucratic and managerial paradigms allows us to open the black box of hybridity and to account for the multiple shades of grey that were hitherto summarised as hybrid identities. With this approach, we answer the concern that, when in contemporary public sectors hardly any pure identities can be found, simply stating that there are increasingly hybrid identities is vacuous. Returning to our initial metaphor, knowing that a

bottle of wine contains a cuvee does not tell much about the character and taste of the wine. Therefore, we provide a first step towards the development of a conceptual framework designed to capture the different kinds of pure and hybrid identities, representing different combinations of bureaucratic and managerial components. *Second*, by applying this framework to 19 European countries, we give an empirical account of country-level identity profiles. These profiles document what pure and hybrid identity combinations can be found in different countries, and whether their relative shares significantly deviate from the overall sample. *Third*, comparing these country-level identity profiles and identifying empirical patterns of similar profiles shows surprising results as the patterns only partly overlap with our expectations regarding established administrative traditions. We therefore conclude that complementary patterning elements, such as, for example, institutional stability (as indicative of lower levels of hybridisation) or reform pressures (as indicative of higher levels of hybridisation) have to be acknowledged.

Our bi-dimensional view on role identity has yielded interesting empirical insights that go beyond only looking at attitudes or equating hybridity simply with undifferentiated mixtures. Taking into consideration the limitations of this exploratory study, we see several avenues for future development and application. With regard to administrative paradigms, we only considered bureaucratic and managerial identity elements: In order to account for Public Governance-inspired arguments that emphasise changes in the way public executives communicate and relate to their internal and external stakeholders, future research could expand our identity concept by a third relational dimension. In addition, the application of our construct in this study was limited by the use of a predefined data set. Although working with such an extraordinarily large and systematic data basis offers great opportunities, it also has several restrictions. Not primarily designed to analyse role identities, we had to reconstruct our identity components out of the given set of questions. These did not cover all elements in an equally comprehensive way, and they only comprised of closed, and no open, questions that could give

insights into the sense-making of the respondents. These limitations resulted in a large number of ambiguous respondents and a restricted set of respondents who expressed pure or hybrid identity combinations. Moreover, the data relates to a specific moment in time and does not allow conclusions about processes of change. A process-oriented bi-dimensional approach could trace how attitudes and practices develop differently over time and thus generate invaluable insights into the nature of the changes going on in the European public sector.

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Appendix 1: Descriptive statistics of country-level identity combinations' occurrences

Country	Pure Bureaucratic			Hybrid				Pure Managerial		
	Attitudes and Practices (Identity) (%)	Attitudes (%)	Practices (%)	Attitudes (%)	Practices (%)	Identity Type A (%)	Identity Type B (%)	Attitudes and Practices (Identity) (%)	Attitudes (%)	Practices (%)
Austria	0.4	12.4	4.4	5.8	4.1	4.1	8.4	1.3	15.1	3.4
Croatia	1.8	16.4	4.3	13.2	7.4	8.2	14.2	0.0	11.0	0.6
Denmark	0.0	6.3	0.7	8.0	8.0	9.2	8.5	1.4	24.4	5.1
Estonia	0.0	11.4	1.3	9.2	10.7	13.1	8.7	1.7	13.8	11.0
Finland	0.4	10.0	2.1	12.5	2.7	8.6	3.8	1.2	13.0	8.5
France	0.5	11.7	3.7	3.4	5.2	3.6	6.0	0.2	13.4	2.0
Germany	0.0	6.4	1.7	4.0	3.1	1.7	3.7	0.2	22.1	0.7
Hungary	1.3	23.4	12.1	1.4	8.3	4.1	4.7	0.0	3.8	0.4
Iceland	1.1	8.6	8.5	19.4	8.2	2.1	21.3	0.0	18.2	0.0
Ireland	0.3	2.0	4.2	3.4	3.6	1.1	7.9	0.3	28.1	0.3
Italy	1.2	23.7	4.2	10.9	34.7	30.8	18.1	0.0	9.4	2.0
Lithuania	0.7	17.3	5.5	11.8	20.4	14.0	16.9	0.0	4.6	0.5
Netherlands	0.0	2.8	1.1	4.5	1.6	1.0	4.4	1.0	31.8	1.6
Norway	0.3	17.2	3.2	5.4	2.5	3.7	3.0	0.3	9.1	0.9
Portugal	0.4	3.4	2.5	7.0	9.7	3.4	25.2	0.7	26.2	0.7
Serbia	1.1	11.4	5.6	15.2	18.5	13.2	18.9	0.1	14.0	0.7
Spain	2.3	18.3	12.7	8.3	4.9	3.1	14.5	0.0	14.0	0.7
Sweden	0.2	21.6	1.2	10.1	6.4	12.2	3.8	0.2	4.8	3.1
UK	0.	0.0	0.5	4.3	3.4	1.1	16.3	1.7	40.0	2.3
Mean	0.6	9.8	3.7	7.0	7.7	6.7	8.2	0.5	11.7	2.4
Min	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	1.6	1.0	3.0	0.0	3.8	0.0
Max	2.3	23.7	12.7	19.4	34.7	30.8	25.2	1.7	40.0	11.0